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**MELBOURNE LIFE.**

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SCRIPOLIS."

*"There's a power whose sway  
Angel souls adore,  
And the lost obey,  
Weeping evermore."*

Melbourne:

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ROSIER'S PREMIER TOUR



[TELEGRAM.]

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A SPECIALITY.—ROSIER'S PRIZE  
SHOOTING BOOTS, having been tho-  
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MYSTERIES

OF

MELBOURNE LIFE.

# MYSTERIES

OF

## MELBOURNE LIFE.

A Story Founded on Fact.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "SCRIPOPOLIS."

*David G. G. G. (d. 1833)*

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*"There's a power whose sway  
Angel souls adore,  
And the lost obey,  
Weeping evermore."*

*Justo judicio Dei judicatus sum; justo judicio Dei condemnatus sum.*

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Melbourne:  
MASON, FIRTH, & M'CUTCHEON, PRINTERS,  
51 & 53 FLINDERS LANE WEST.

# MYSTERIES OF MELBOURNE LIFE.

## PROLOGUE.

The moon had risen over the distant mountains of Gippsland, and was shedding her glorious light on hill and valley, river and pool, city and suburb—mellowing into beauty the harsher features of the landscape, casting over all that wonderful glamour which has enthralled every race of man, from the grand Chaldeans, who worshipped her as Astarté, to our British forefathers, who held mystic rites in her honor in the deep oak forests that then covered what is now smoke-begrimed, railway-ridden England. Gliding over the sky like a spirit of light, and peace, and beauty, it seemed as if she heeded not the weary turmoil that went on beneath—the great city with its sin and shame, the country with its toil and wretchedness, the sea with its numberless little floating worlds, having so much in common with the greater;—no, the Queen of Heaven moved on majestically across the cold blue skies, emblem of peace and Eternity. She had looked upon scene after scene like this for thousands of years—she had met the gaze of millions and millions yearning to know what she was, worshipping her as a deity, drawing strength and poetry from her beauty. The scenes had changed, the earnest eyes were dust and ashes long ago, and still she pursued her midnight path, sweet and gentle as of yore, when she blessed the gaze of weary Sappho on the Lesbian isle.

Little Billy Dawson might have had some thoughts like the above floating through his dwarfed mind—dwarfed through no fault of his own—but certainly he could not have put them on paper. He knew the moon was beautiful—he knew, when he looked up into the sky and saw her he felt better, his soul seemed to rise out of its narrow prison-house, but he could give no explanation of this to the philosopher. Keenly as he felt the glorious influence, it is very probable he would make a reply to an enquiry more emphatic than poetical. But Billy, poor fellow! was only the roughest of

the genus "larrikin." His apology for clothes, his shrunken form, attenuated face, and sharp eyes, told easily that he lived upon his wits, and a scanty living they had afforded; still, notwithstanding all this, there was a merry twinkle in his eyes, which hinted of a fund of joviality. But poor, crushed-down, policeman-fearing fellow, he had few opportunities to be merry. And on this occasion, as he was wandering amongst the wattles by the banks of the Yarra, where the moon created fantastic lights and shadows, fun was far from him; for he was "in trouble," to use his own expression, and did not exactly know what to do. Still Billy, like all colonial youths, took matters coolly, and debated with himself as to the best manner of getting over his little embarrassment, a visit to the country appearing the most natural, being preferable to a visit to the lock-up.

The boy had advanced into a thick part of the scrub when he suddenly became transfixed, and stood in the shadow of a large wattle, still as a statue, his eyes and mouth opening wide as with terror, his whole aspect one of horror and apprehension. The perspiration burst from every pore. Standing there in the shadow, he was a perfect personification of surprise and fear. Gradually these feelings wore away; he recovered the use of his limbs, and took a few uneasy steps, appearing indecisive as to what he should do. Curiosity was very powerful in Billy's organization, and what he had witnessed was so strange, so terrible, that he could not resist the impulse which drew him, as by some invisible agency, towards the spot. He stopped several times and listened, then, hearing nothing, went on until he reached the place where the tragedy had been consummated. Clinging to a wattle, he gazed with starting eyes on the scene.

In a spot on which the moonlight shone in patches, the shadows of the wattles moving to and fro as the wind stirred the trees, lay the dead body of a woman. Evidences there

were of a desperate struggle: the ground was disturbed in all directions; the limbs of the poor creature were distorted, her dress disordered. But Billy never forgot the expression upon that pale, upturned face, from which the eyes were starting with the terror of the last agony. The moonlight shone upon it, and revealed to him every feature. It was pitiful, pitiful. Thin and faded was the face, once beautiful; thin and faded the dress, once costly. Thin and faded, gone, dead;—gone to meet the dread Judge, and to cry for vengeance upon the one who had sent her into Eternity, with all her sins upon her head.

That face! Its lineaments seemed to remind him of some dream, some shadow haunting the storehouses of memory!

How the boy shook! That night added whole years to his experience.

Closer still he drew to the dreadful thing, noting everything with the keenness of an observation sharpened by mystery. Suddenly he started. In one of the worn hands was a lock of hair, which in the last struggle she had torn from her destroyer. Billy looked at it closely; it was of a beautiful brown, slightly curling. He jotted that down in his memory.

Standing there, alone with the dead in the moonlight, this poor, untutored outcast, clenched his hands and set his teeth, as he thought of the cowardly murderer who had in his sight done this deed.

"I'll know him again," said he; "I'm sure I will. I saw his face just as he turned to go away; it was a face I won't forget. And I'll mark him; that I will! Poor, poor girl!"

And his tears dropped silently over the still, dead form, far beyond human joy or sorrow.

Suddenly steps were heard. The boy turned round with terror on his face, and, knowing it would be fatal to him, in his present predicament, to be found near the body, he sprang away with a bound.

And the body was left alone in the moonlight, guarded by the spectral wattle shadows, that moved hither and thither.

## PART I.

### THE SHADOW.

The sunshine was streaming on the busy streets of Melbourne, and men were hurrying hither and thither, intent on the mighty business of money-getting. The week had been one of dull, damp weather; fogs had hovered over the city; and the channels had

overflowed and filled the shops of too patient ratepayers, so that it was no wonder people took advantage of this sudden peep of fine weather to saunter out and get through their city affairs. And coming, as it did, after such an inclement interval, the day had the same effect as one of those smiling oases that light up the barrenness of the desert. A clear blue sky vaulted the scene and a fresh, though keen air ruddied the cheeks of all who chose to sally forth. It would have required more than this, however, to have brightened the face of a young man who was walking, or rather slinking, up Collins-street feeling himself out of place amongst the corpulent capitalists and the plethoric matrons in black silk or velvet, full of flesh and finery, who did the block with their daughters under the eyes of the beaux. And yet this young man had moved amongst the Collins-street crowd but very recently, and had been held in as much honor as any of these handsome youths who now turned up their nose at his exceedingly shabby garb.

He was a man of about twenty-five years of age. Life, however, is not counted by years; the body ages otherwise than by the slow process of days and months. Dressed in other clothes, he would have appeared very handsome, but the stamp of the mint of vice would not have been effaced. His face was of that sickly white which tells of dissipation; its once rounded outlines had become pinched, and around his eyes, wild and dark, lines appeared that should not mar the beauty of youth. But it was not these that told of the evil life he had led; it was that indescribable expression of a fallen nature which stamps every vicious face, added to by a vivid despair that marked each feature, and a wild, impatient light in his unfathomable eyes, which told he felt hate not only for all human kind but for himself.

Hugh Hanlon knew too well that he had no one to blame for the shame and ignominy of his position but himself; that, but for his own actions, those who now passed him by as if he were a leper, would have pressed his hand and smiled upon him with every demonstration of friendship. It has been written that on the Last Great Day the Eye of the Judge will convey to each mind in a second the deeds it has done: there are times in this life when the soul is deeply touched—when, with lightning rapidity, there flashes upon the memory every wrong step that we have taken, every opportunity we have neglected; and, if there can be a foretaste of Heaven, surely such moments are a foreshadowing

of the torments of the habitations of woe. One of these crises was upon Hugh as he stopped in front of a bank and prepared to enter, glancing furtively around, to see that no one was following, *for he was in deadly fear of the myrmidons of the law*. There was a great dread upon his soul.

It was a fine building that he entered—a bank with a massive stone front, rising grandly over the pigmy shops on each side, like some noble nature towering above its vile, insignificant, earth-grubbing compeers. There was an air of solid comfort, of luxury, about it that revolted at the idea of the entrance into its sacred precincts of a being so world-forsaken as Hugh; and if the stones of the splendid portal had been sentient, they would have seized and thrust out the intruder. What right had he in that great hall, flooded with a mellow light from the glass dome that rose gracefully overhead? What right had he to stand side by side with these well-fed, well-clad men, who were making out their pay-in slips at the elegant tables, or handing cheques to the clerks, perched up behind the elaborately-carved and varnished desks? Was this not the home of wealth, and the resort of men who held some of the mammon of unrighteousness? What right had he there?

What right but that of cold and hunger—hunger, which will tame even the wildest and proudest nature.

He had come there to beg of two men who had, but a few years since, been dear to him and he to them. And now he was a wretched outcast; they stood behind their desks, looking happy and comfortable.

Hugh's gaze first fell on the cashier. He was a strong, well-built, young man, perhaps a little older than himself, but how different! Harry Robertson was a tall, well-built, handsome man, with energy and determination written in every line of his well-formed features, and pervading every action. Not that he appeared worldly and selfish. On the contrary, his mouth had a singularly sweet expression, especially when he smiled, and his eyes were full of gentle light, that flashed forth irresistibly whenever occasion offered, and prepossessed all who met his frank, fearless gaze. His high forehead betokened study, and the grave cast of his countenance told that his time was not frivolously employed. The careful observer, too, could notice shades of sadness cross his countenance at times, as clouds now and then darken the fields on the bright summer days. But now he was intent on counting out rolls

of notes and little pillars of gold and silver to the customers, who, as it was near the close of bank hours, were thronging around. As Hugh gazed on him he felt something rise to his throat, and the recollections of the many happy days they had spent together acted like a spell. He hastily turned his eyes away, and fixed them on a young man who was answering some inquiries, perched up behind an exceedingly handsome desk. Here, indeed, was something for the eye to look upon: Robert Wilton was one of these youths who bring back to the mind the days of Greece, when men were godlike in face and form. Not that Robert was exactly one of these "lionlike men," with tawny beard, &c., who are the especial delight of gushing sensational lady novelists; he was nothing of the kind. He was an inexpressibly elegantly-formed youth, with a face that is very difficult to describe, but which many can imagine when they recall the darlings of their youth, the school favorites, the loved ones of the hearth. His face was round but not too full; his eyes brown, and formed for melting glances; and his mouth was capable of a witching smile, that could stay the wrath of the most unimpressible. Over all this, there was cast an expression of such kindness, guilelessness, and genial good-humor, that made the whole *ensemble* irresistible.

Viewing the busy scene, Hugh felt something of the tortures of the damned. There flashed through his brain, in *tableaux* after *tableaux*, the past history of these two young men and himself. He remembered their growing up together, their early friendship, their schooldays, so full of boyish affection and boyish quarrels—the times when they entered upon the business of life in that very same bank, with downy cheeks and hearts beating high with hope at the fair vista opening before them. How happy they had been when, after their day's work was over, they would stroll out together and seek diversion, their minds without a care! He even remembered that they derived a positive pleasure from the performance of their duties; and this had continued until the shadow had come in the shape of woman, and then came hopeless love, hate, wild dissipation, reckless madness, despair, disgrace, debt, and now —!

But there came, too, recollections of how these men had striven to save—how they had lent money to no end, which he squandered in evil ways—how they had, with merciful hands, sought to turn him out of the way of destruction, and how he had spurned them!

Yet this had no effect upon him; it was but as the final strokes on the numbed nerves of him who is broken on the wheel. He shut his eyes and closed his ears, and would not heed. He had entered upon a path of his own, and he would allow no one to lead him.

He knew that it would be vain to ask Harry for anything, for he had long since resolutely refused to hold any intercourse with him. But he had always found that Robert's nature could not refuse an appeal. And yet how he hated him; how his eyes gleamed when they lit on the once friendly face! It was Robert who had come between him and the one he loved; but for his cursed fascination he might have been a happy, prosperous man. And he knew well that, ere many weeks, Robert would call her his own, that—but here the man's face became hideous with the envy and revenge that swelled his heart to bursting. What dreadful thoughts the sight of that bright young face created in the mind of this unfortunate fallen man! Could those who stood around have imagined what they were they would have seized him and hurled him out into the street, as they would a deadly viper.

But hunger is all-powerful, and Hugh had tasted nothing for two days. His companions in wickedness had deserted him when his money was spent, and he would make no exertion to earn his living. It was desperation that urged him to come here to-day. As the customers were now departing, he walked over to the desk behind which Robert stood. Robert was marking some cheque when he heard the well-known voice, and the start he gave, and the change of color in his face, announced the impression it made. But it was only momentary. Advised by Harry, he had resolved to cast off this man, who had so utterly gone astray, and to whom it was cruelty to lend money.

"What do you want?" he asked in as stern a voice as he could.

"Want!" said Hugh; "can you look at me and ask that?"

"If you want money," said Robert, "you'll not get it from me. As long as there appeared the slightest hope of reformation, Harry and I supplied you with funds; but when we saw that the more we gave, the worse it was for you, that our hard-earned money was squandered, we resolved to give no more. We believe that the only way of reforming you is to leave you to be taught by necessity; you will then be compelled to labor, and perhaps that will bring back those regular habits and proper respect for yourself

which can alone make you what you were. Then, notwithstanding all that has passed, we will step forward, and do all we can to place you in a position equal to that which you have lost. We will do this," said Robert, his voice growing kinder and lower, "because we never can forget what we were to one another."

And he buried his face in the ledger.

"But, but," said Hugh, in a tone that denoted anger struggling with his ravenous desire for food, which tamed his ferocity, "but, but give me a few shillings, and I'll never come near you again. I am hungry."

Robert raised his face.

"This is no country for you to plead that," said he calmly, though it was easy to see he had to struggle with his naturally kind heart. "You cannot starve if you like to work, and work you must to bring you back to your senses. You need not press in that way. Take care! or I'll send for a policeman."

Hugh fell back, and his eyes dilated till they seemed to fill with fire. Then conquering nature, which counselled abject supplianee, he spoke out in a voice which no one who heard it ever forgot.

"This from you!" said he. "This to a poor starving wretch from a man with abundance, in comfort, surrounded by all that can be desired! I will never forget this moment, and I will never forgive. I have sinned and fallen; so may you, Mr. Robert Wilton, with all your pretty ways and many friends. And you will, you will; I know you will! And when that comes to pass, may the same be meted out to you which you have meted out to me!"

And with a rapid step he passed out of the bank, amidst the wonder of all present, who thought some melodramatic madman had fallen amongst them. There was a general laugh when he cleared out, but Robert's face was for a while clouded, for he had gone against his whole nature in acting as he had, and knowing the strange, vindictive, impulsive nature of Hugh, he could not but feel a dread at his words, particularly when he remembered that many had said he had become partially insane.

"You have done well," said Harry, when the day's work was over, and they were quitting the bank. "As long as you would supply money he would do no good; now necessity will force him to change his life."

"Perhaps for the worse," said Robert; "he might commit suicide, or steal. Think of him dead, or in gaol, Harry—Hugh, who was once so dear to us."



"I do not think it will come to that," said Harry, in his grave tones. "I believe that he will yet thank us for what we have done."

Hugh stood outside the bank door one moment, the impersonification of hate and despair. His heart cried out for revenge, but was met with the utter inability to gratify its wish. This state of the mind, of all the tortures which can be ours, is undoubtedly that most akin to the torment which Christians believe shall be adjudged to sinners hereafter. The only comparison that can be made is a lost sinner standing on the confines of the place of doom, watching afar off the happiness in Heaven of those whom he hated and ill-used on earth.

Suddenly he started like a guilty thing, and cowering as if struck, slunk down a back lane, and with hurried steps rushed away, and did not stop until he reached a distant street. Here he paused, and glanced around to see if he was followed. There was a hoarding near at hand, and on it the bill-posters of the city had exercised all their talents. Big letters and little letters strove to express the astonishment they felt at the talents of such a one, or the efficacy of So-and-so's Eternal Pills, while wretched wood engravings attempted to convey to the beholder an idea of wonders which never existed except in the imagination of the artist. Hugh ran over them with the avidity of one who seeks to distract the attention of his mind from a dreadful pain and agonising anxiety. But when his eye met one of these announcements he gave a short gasp, and his face became ghastly. Then steadying himself he read it over carefully. It ran thus:—

**£500 REWARD.**

Whereas, on the night of —, —, —, a woman, whose name is at present unknown, was murdered in the scrub on the banks of the Yarra, by some person or persons also unknown, the above reward will be paid to any person giving such information as will lead to the conviction of the murderer. A pardon is offered to an accomplice.

Signed,

&c., &c.

Such was the proclamation in effect, expunging the legalities. Hugh seemed to breathe more freely after he had read it. Then the overmastering passion for food and rest returned with a thousandfold force. Food he must have. He thought with horror of the place which had sheltered him for a while, the Immigrants' Home; how he had been huddled up with eighty others of the wretched and miserable, with clothes enough to shiver in, and—but we will pause. Even that had been denied him, for he had

been turned out as one who would do no good. Once more the passion for food overmastered shame and fear, and he sought Collins-street to see if he could meet any old friend who would give him something.

Collins-street was now in all its glory. Crowds of people streamed backwards and forwards, as if only bent on one thing—seeing and being seen. Business was over; the banks and offices were turning out their young men, who were sallying forth to meet their companions and make off to rowing or other amusements, or to dance attendance on the young ladies with whom they were flirting. At the doors of fashionable shops little knots of ladies were gathered, obstructing the footways, and discussing the latest fashion and scandal. Portly dowagers, who ten or twenty years since had done service at the washtub, now lounged back in their carriages with all the grace imaginable, as if seeking to strike all carriageless and moneyless beholders with unutterable envy, whereas laughter was only evoked. It was a vanity fair on a small scale. Hugh sought a little lane, where he stood like a Ghoul looking out on the fair scene. He drew back hastily when Harry and Robert passed by arm in arm. Their day's work was over, and, no doubt, they were strolling up to the Athenæum, to get the latest books wherewith to pass the evening hours, just as they three used to do years ago. They seemed without a care, without a trouble. How the man cursed them in his heart, and what would have become of them if his curses only had power? His eyes followed them eagerly, and flashed with lurid light when the two stopped before a bevy of fashionable ladies. Yes—that was Linda whose little hand was held so tenderly by Robert, whose blue eyes looked into his so lovingly, whose golden ringlets fluttered in the breeze, as she tossed her dainty head while chiding him, and whose clipsome waist looked as if it had been made to be clasped by the dear, handsome fellow, who gazed on her with as much ardor as decorum allowed. Yes; it was Linda, light-hearted, frolicsome Linda, whom they three had known and loved from childhood, who had grown up with them, and whose heart, sought so eagerly by each, had been surrendered wholly and unconditionally to the curled darling, Robert, the "Bobs" of that quadrilateral. His heart swelled as he looked on that happy scene, and he turned his face aside, for it was not for him. She would turn with loathing from him now.



Hugh was not the only one who was rendered unhappy. Harry's face grew graver, notwithstanding the pleasant smile Linda gave him, and after a few trifling observations, he said quietly—"I must go as far as the Athenæum Club, Bob; Linda, I am sure, will excuse me."

They knew why he did not stay, and their hearts thrilled as they each thought of his noble self-sacrifice. No one of the three had loved Linda so truly so nobly, so passionately, as quiet Harry, but nevertheless he resigned her calmly to his more fortunate friend. He bowed his head to the stroke of fate, and no one could guess what agony that manly heart had suffered in the still hours of the night, mourning over its lost love, and lost life. Now, with all the force of his strong nature, he strove to drive that hopeless love out of his heart, to make it but a sweet memory of the past, and he knew he could not do it while under the magic influence of that dear face. So he went on his way, seeking solitude, to forget the beautiful vision which once had been his. How differently had Hugh acted!

As he stood in the lane he heard the silvery voice he had loved so well.

"But you must come home with us, Bobs. How dare you refuse me, you saucy fellow? If you go on in that way, I'll pull out some of your curls."

"Time enough for that when they are yours," said Robert, tossing his head until his curls shook again. "Well, if I must, I must; but I protest against your exercising authority before the time."

And he took his seat in the neat carriage side by side with Linda, whose face beamed with delight, manifesting her deep affection for dear "Bobs." Yet a slight shade passed over his countenance as he thought remorsefully of poor Harry, away in the lonely suite of rooms they occupied together, poring over some heavy work on banking, science, or philosophy, striving to beat down the rebellious passion that had desolated his young life.

"I wish I were dead; I wish I were dead!" cried Hugh, as the carriage drove away. "I know I will go mad; I feel it, I feel it. What is this?"

The exclamation was elicited by the glimpse of the face of a lady who was passing by. She was splendidly dressed—after a fashion—wore gorgeous jewellery, a hoop of gold encircling her throat, and she looked handsome indeed in her black velvet dress, relieved by costly trimmings. Her face was very beautiful, the contour rounded

faultlessly, but there was too much in it of the heartless siren to please the pure of heart. It was a fatal and fearful face, and just then there was an expression upon it that justified calling it that of a beautiful demon. She had been watching Robert spring into the carriage, and drive away with Linda nestling close to him. After all, her face and that of Hugh bore the same expression of disappointed love and hate.

She turned round abruptly when she heard Hugh's exclamation.

"You, you"—she said in an amazed tone, "And you, you have seen this?"

"Yes," he replied quietly.

She glanced at his shabby garb, or rather no garb, and intuitively understood the whole. Taking out her purse, she handed to him a ten pound note, and then wrote on a card a few words, and gave it to him.

As a landscape hitherto concealed in the shadow of heavy clouds bursts out into brightness and beauty, when the sun shines through a rift, so did Hugh's gloomy face change when that money was placed in his hand. Ah me! Gold is the true sunshine of this world.

"Come to that address," said she quietly; and then gathering up her dress, she walked away.

Again he glanced at that talisman with the eagerness of a madman, joyously clutched it, turned it over and over, grasped it with both hands, as if afraid some one would take it from him; then, with an exultant chuckle, rushed away to the back bar of an hotel close by, where he poured down glass after glass of brandy, until his face grew flushed, his eyes flashed wildly with excitement, and he became a changed being.

## PART II.

### THE FIRST STEP.

*Tempus Fugit!* Six months have passed since the events last narrated. The turn of the wheel has changed the position of all the parties in our little drama. "Bobs" is now a fast prisoner in the chains of Hymen, forged by beautiful Linda. Harry Robertson has experienced a great alteration in fortune. An aged relative who had never, to all appearances, taken the slightest notice of Harry, died and bequeathed all his property to him. Something very large it was, too, for he had been one of the oldest colonists, and had been very saving. The following in his will, however, showed the old

gentleman had not been unobservant: "I have carefully noticed his (Harry's) conduct for years, and have seen that instead of foolishly depending upon expectations, he has set to work with a will to build his own fortune, hence I pass others over, and bequeath my property to him because I know he will make a proper use of the valuable bequest." So Harry had left the bank, and was now installed in the beautiful place his dead relative had built in St. Kilda.

The sun was declining in the western sky, casting over the earth, so soon to be enveloped in the shadows of night, beams richer and mellower than his noontide rays, as if to prepare the world for the peaceful change that was coming on. The light of departing day fell on few scenes so beautiful as that presented at the little villa of Robert Wilton, an unpretending, cosy cottage on the outskirts of East St. Kilda, with a neat lawn and flower beds in front. Tending one of these parterres, attired in a bewitching garden costume, was Linda. It is difficult to say what she was doing, although her own opinion was that she was working, and working very hard, too. But all ladies who have gardens fancy that. It was easy to see, however, that the flowers, beautiful as they were, occupied but a little space in Linda's mind. Her eyes turned continually towards the railway station, and when a train stopped she desisted from her "labor," and watched for a well-known form, pouting when she saw the iron monster go on its way, and no appearance of the desired person. Standing over those beds of flowers, gorgeous with crimson, and gold and blue blossom, Linda Wilton fell into a reverie in which all the sweet dream of their wedded life was presented to her view. What a delicious dream it was! She remembered the delirious days of happiness that followed that fluttering, agitating ceremony which made them one; the happy time spent at Queenscliff, where they went after the wedding; then the settling down into a peaceful pleasant life in this home, now so inexpressibly dear to her, as associated with all that had been brightest in her life. Not a shadow had fallen upon them. Oh! was it not happiness supreme to meet the dear handsome fellow every evening when he returned from the city, to be clasped in his arms, and to receive that loving kiss so dear to the devoted wife; to pass with him the quiet evening in reading or other amusements, with music to vary the pleasures?

But why dwell on these things? Is there a husband or wife who can recall the first six months of their wedded life, and not sigh over the Elysium that has passed for ever from their grasp into the eternal shadows, a thing to be dreamed of, but never again realised? Enough!

Would this last? Light-hearted as Linda was, that question even now entered into her mind, as did the serpent into Paradise. Even Linda thought it too bright to continue. Had she not noticed a slight change in Bob lately?

"Bottles, ma'am, any bottles to sell—give twice the vally, and no mistake."

Linda looked up. Outside the fence stood a ragged urchin who, according to his stature, should be only about ten years, but whose face, wizened like that of a man of sixty, showed he was a great deal older. A cunning monkey countenance it was, indeed. He carried an old basket in which were several empty bottles.

A sudden idea of making money occurred to Madame Linda. There were a lot of bottles in the yard; therefore, after some preliminary bargaining with this new Alnaschar, in which she thought she showed wonderful business capacity, she sent him round to the back to get the bottles off the generally useful lad who, with a general servant, formed Robert's establishment.

Master Patsy Quinlan, blinking his owl-like eyes, which seemed to dislike the light, and laughing in his sleeve at the very advantageous bargain made with Linda, opened the side gate, and made his way to the kitchen, not forgetting to keep a careful look out on either side to see what Providence might throw in his way, for this interesting youth was a picker up of unconsidered trifles, and never looked a gift horse in the mouth.

"Missus sent me round for the bottles," said he, addressing a youth who was industriously hosing a well-made little horse which appeared to enjoy the operation.

"Hillo!" cried the youth, turning sharp round, and dropping the hose as if it were red hot, to the discomfort of a cat who was sunning herself, and who received the *douche*, "Where did you spring from?"

"Well I'm blowed!" cried the equally surprised bottle-merchant, almost dropping his basket Alnascharlike. "I'm blessed if it ain't Billy Dawson, as we all thought 'ad gone on the farmin' lay, nothin' a week and find yourself. Why I wouldn't ha' known ye!"

Neither would the reader have recognised our little vagrant of the Yarra scrub. He was dressed neatly in white moleskin trousers, kept up by a leather belt with a serpent buckle, and wore a red crimean shirt; his hair was cut after the style, and his face was filling out and assuming the rounded proportions proper to the blooming time of life. On the whole, a young nursemaid would have set him down as not a bad-looking fellow.

"So they didn't nab you, eh?" asked Mr. Patsy Quinlan with a queer chuckle; "you always was a knowing card, Bill. Why, I was cotched, and the beak sent me to quod for three months, sayin' I was the biggest larrikin in Melbourne."

"Well, wasn't it true?" said Bill; uneasily, however, for he didn't seem to relish the presence of this fellow.

"No, it wasn't," said the other sharply; "I might be the wust, Master Bill, but I wasn't the biggest, he! he! he!" and the little goblin laughed at his own wit. "But, how on earth did you anchor here and get on the square, eh?"

"Well it was fortunate," replied Bill, "Ye see when you'd led me to try and steal the books from Cole's—"

"Steal," said Mr. Patsy, "what ails you—can't you say prig?"

"No," replied Bill; "missus is teaching me better."

"Oho!" cried Patsy; "you're becomin' a genelman, eh? Genelman Bill—O!"—and he laughed his eldritch laugh. "Well, purceeded, genelman."

"Well!" continued Bill, rather doggedly, "I knew I'd catch it from old Sturt if he set eyes on me again, for he'd given me plain warning last time, so I made tracks."

"Tracks is good," said Patsy—"you ain't forgotten your hedication altogether."

"And I saw such a thing when I was hiding in the Yarra scrub," said Bill, lowering his voice. "Patsy, did you ever see a murder?"

"A murder!" said the goblin. "Well, I might have, and I mightn't. It's very interesting; besides, I'd like to take lessons—don't know when they'd be handy! he! he!"

"Shut up, you hardened vagabond," cried Bill. "Well, I saw a murder, Patsy, one of the terriblest as could be; a poor woman killed by a great big young fellow; it makes my flesh creep. I can't forget it, Patsy; why when I go to sleep I dream of it every night, and think I see the corpse come to my bedside and make faces at me,

and threaten to kill me if I don't do something to scrag the fellow—"

"Scrag's good," said Patsy, rubbing his hands, "You ain't altogether forgot, he! he!"

"Well, I was frightened, and ran away, an' I kept wandering about for several days. First I went to a little farmer or milkman down Brighton. Nice place, Patsy; we had to work from daylight to twelve at night milkin' cows, diggin' mangolds, and that sort of thing; and all we got in return was five bob a week, and cold potatoes and skim-milk. Lord! It was high. Did I say we got five bob a week—bless you, no; for when I'd been there some weeks I felt as if I could do no more work, for I was weak as a rat; and I goes to the boss and asks for my wages. 'Wages, you vagabond,' says he; 'why, you've drawed your wages, and owe me six shillins!' Well, I tried to argue with him; but it was no use, he took me by the collar, and bundled me out at the gate."

"That's a capital kind of argyment," said Patsy; "beat yours hollow."

"Lord! didn't my heart grow big at the thought of that—to slave like a horse, sleep on a bit of straw, shiverin' with cold, all for potatoes and skim-milk, when he was makin his fortune. No wonder there's so many larrikins and thieves, Patsy, when that's the way poor fellows who want to live honestly get treated."

"So you wanted to live honestly, did ye," said Patsy: "That's new; it is."

"I did," said Bill earnestly. "I was sick of the life I'd led with you and the other chaps, and wanted to try and live right, as poor mother used to talk about. Well, when I was turned off I didn't know what to do; I was without clothes, without money, and afraid of the blue-flies.\* I kept knocking about until I got quite desperate; and then one day I was passin' this place, when I saw that angel, my missus; an' when I looks in her face, why I thought I saw pity shinin' out of it. How I shivered; how cold I was; how hungry; and everybody hunting me about like a wild beast. 'Get out, ye larrikin,' said they. I wonder if they've got hearts, Patsy?"

"Yes—gizzards," replied Patsy. "They'd weep like a cordicordile while eatin' of ye."

"But when I spoke up and told missus I was dyin' with cold and hunger, the blessed woman believed me—"

"Fast time you was believed," giggled Patsy.

"—And she took me to the kitchen and told

Mrs. Moran, that's the cook, to feed me. O! Lord, wasn't it beautiful to sit by the warm fire, and eat till you couldn't take in more?"

"Don't know," said Patsy, "never 'sperenced anything like that."

"Then she came and listened to what I told her—"

"A good story, I'll be bound," said Patsy.

"And she believed me, and got Mr. Wilton to take me as a generally useful boy, for they want one to chop wood, dig the garden, and mind Valentine, the horse, and Lucy, the cow; and here I've been, happy as the day's long, and hopin' to grow better. It's wonderful the way missus is bringing me on; my mind seems to grow and grow, and I appear to be getting to know so much."

"And you're growing in statter, too," said Patsy. "Fillin' out nicely, eh?"

"Yes," replied Bill stoutly, "and I don't want to return to that dreadful life I once led. There's only one thing I want. I'd like to meet the cowardly wretch who killed the poor gal. I'd give him up, I would. Lord? Patsy, I'm not the same fellow I used to be at all."

"Not you," said Patsy; "forgot all yer old friends, but yer old friends won't forget you—specially the bluebottles. I could do you a nice trick now; I could have you took up for that search after knowledge, and other little jobs. But I 'spects you've gone in for what the chaps in the Gospel Hall blow about: meekness and charity. If I hit you on one cheek you'd turn the other—"

"Just try," laconically observed Bill.

"Well, well" said Patsy, dropping his voice; "we won't quarrel, old boy. Ha'n't they got lots o' nice things inside?"

"Perhaps they have," said Bill.

"Silver spoons as can walk off by their own selves, purses as can't feel comfortable 'ceptin' in my pocket—you know."

"I know nothing," said Bill doggedly.

"Of course," said Patsy, edging close to Bill. "You know, old chap, we could manage matters nicely, just as Bob Smith did—you let me in at night, and leave all the rest to me. Lord! I'm so small, they couldn't see me."

"Look here," said Bill, in a determined voice, "if you don't shut up I'll make you."

"All right. Rec'lect how you could give up work, dress fine, an' 'ave cigars and brandy, just like Bob Smith."

"Shut up," cried Bill, "I'll kick you out of the gate."

"Oho!" continued the aggravating Patsy;

"why, how you've lost your bad temper lately. You're grown quite an angel, only I don't see your wings—"

"Then feel them," cried Bill, who could no longer stand the sarcasms of his quondam ally, and he made lights dance before Patsy's eyes such as he had not seen for a few days. Hereupon a regular stand-up fight took place. Patsy, though small, was wiry, and hitting seemed to have the same effect upon him as on an iron post. He was used to blows, and took them kindly; like Antaeus, *in re* the earth, they gave him fresh strength. But Bill was strong, and an expert at his fists, so that it is likely Patsy would have had to fly, had not Mrs. Moran, who was attracted by the noise, become a witness of the conflict; and she at once raised such an outcry, that Linda and Harry Robertson, who had just arrived, came running round to ascertain what was the matter. The boys were then separated, and Patsy sent about his business.

"Oho! my cove," said he, scowling on Bill as he went out; "I'll be even with you yet, you meek and holy repperbate, blowed if I don't."

"How do you like the angel's wings?" cried Bill triumphantly, as he shut-to the gate with a bang.

"Better'n you'll like the bluebottles' darbies," cried Patsy with a frightful grin.

Bill's explanation of the fight was satisfactory, though Harry could not but question the policy of having such a boy about the house. As he had been the associate of thieves and rogues, he might be persuaded to assist in robbing the place. But Linda stoutly maintained that he was a true-hearted fellow, and that she would stake her life on his truth. So, for the present, the matter ended. Bill was at first a little frightened for fear Patsy would carry his threats into execution; but when he reflected that the police-office was about the last place on earth that interesting youth would willingly visit, for certain reasons well-known to himself, he felt more at his ease; and having groomed Valentine, proceeded to milk Lucy with all the comfort imaginable. The individual most ruffled by the encounter had been Scrix, the cat, which, owing to the unexpected shower-bath did not thoroughly recover her temper until she had had it out with Snix, the poodle, after which was all amity.

In the drawingroom Harry Robertson and Linda sat conversing, Linda's eyes ever wandering to see if "Bobs" was coming. What



a splendid man Harry Robertson was become! His form had filled out into elegant yet powerful proportions, and gave the impression of beauty and strength. His face, guarded by a short dark brown beard, was noble and thoughtful in contour, and his splendid brow conveyed an idea of unmistakeable intellectuality. There was something about the whole *ensemble* of this man that told of personal and mental superiority, fitting him for the worship of lesser beings. The element of haughtiness, which detracts from so many such men, was entirely absent. It is only those who have not thought deeply who are proud or haughty. The man who has studied knows too much to look upon even the meanest of God's creatures with contempt. So, there was ever on Harry's handsome face a kind sympathetic look that seemed to go abroad to all, and to feel for everyone. The sweet winning smile never deserted him, and coming from such a man it was irresistible.

Irresistible, did I say? Oh it had not been successful in winning Linda's love. But Harry had driven that passion into those shaded corners of the heart where lie so many of past and gone hopes, and now he looked upon her only as the wife of the friend who was dearer to him than anyone in the world, for his heart had not gone forth to a soul since its disappointment with Linda. Occupied as he was with noble thoughts, with the study of the problems of this life, with an active interest in the development of the great country to which he owed so much, Harry was protected from the evils that ruin the thoughtless moths who fall so easily into the snare of forbidden love.

How dear Robert was to him he had never found out until they separated. For years they had lived together, never apart for a day; their minds open to each other as the sky at noonday, their hearts beating in unison. It is true that Hugh Hanlon's brilliancy had at times eclipsed Harry's slower abilities, and that Robert would be decoyed away to join some of Hugh's wild freaks; but although he was fond of, and often fascinated, by Hugh, he always returned to Harry. Why? Because he honored and respected the one, while he merely admired the other. How inexpressibly lonely had Harry felt when his companion left the old house and sought a new partner! But such partings must be in this changeable world; and so Harry learned to bear with the loss if not to forget.

"I have often wondered," said Linda, after one of her unsuccessful glances at the window, "what became of Hugh Hanlon. He was such a companion of yours once, and of Bob's."

"I do not know," replied Harry.

"I was quite frightened on our wedding-day," said Linda thoughtfully; "I feel certain that when we were coming out of St. Peter's I saw Hugh in one of the pews with a splendidly-dressed woman by his side. He looked at me in a strange manner; and she, too, appeared to glance at me malevolently."

"You were excited," said Harry, "and conjured up such phantasma. But, Linda, I have often wished to talk to you about a subject that interests me greatly. Have you noticed any alteration in Bobs recently?"

A slight shade passed over Linda's beautiful face.

"Yes, Harry, yes," she replied. "But it is only the change that must occur. I can't expect he'll always be so fond of me, or stay at home so much. Indeed, it cannot be expected, for a man must move amongst his kind to make himself acquainted with the world."

"That is right enough," said Harry; "but I begin to find a strange change in his behavior. He, who used to be the sweetest fellow in the world, gets quite snappish with me at times, and I notice he keeps company with some of the fastest men about town. Linda, Linda, keep him from them. O! If you knew the many broken hearts, blasted reputations, untimely deaths, shame and degradation, the result of intercourse with them, you would do all you could to keep him away. I try to get him to visit me, that I might interest him in some study or natural amusement; but he avoids anything serious. I fear he is becoming too light."

"O! it will end well," said Linda, like all wives anxious to shield her husband. "Bob says he has enough hard work all day, without studying at night."

"I didn't mean study," said Harry, "I meant proper amusements, such as would keep him away from dangerous haunts."

"O! don't talk so Harry," said Linda. "I'm sure the dear fellow will do what is proper."

Harry shook his head. He knew that Robert had never had what is known amongst young fellows as a "fling," and that if he "turned out" now, the consequences, in spite of his pretty wife, might be serious.

"Can it be possible that the change in his conduct towards me lately is caused by jealousy?" asked Harry. "It appears to me as if he did not like to see me here."

"Impossible," said Linda, laughing; "Bob jealous of you—O! that would be absurd. O! here comes the dear fellow."

And with fairy footsteps she tripped towards the gate, where she expected to be folded in Bob's arms. But merely taking her hand, he said "There—don't be childish," and led her up to the house where Harry stood on the steps. "Don't be childish"—never had he behaved like this before. Linda felt perplexed and disappointed. Was her love becoming cheap, and of no account?

Bob was handsomer, and, if possible, more fascinating than ever. Linda and he formed a fine pair, Bob so graceful, with limbs so correctly moulded, face so exquisitely modelled, lit by the incessant play of the feelings; she so gentle, fairy-like, beautiful. But Robert's face was not exactly as when last we saw it. There was on it this evening a sort of impatient, sulking expression, as if he were fretting and had been disappointed. He did not meet Harry with his usual ardor, and he flung into the house in a mood which utterly astonished Linda and Harry, who followed in a sort of dazed way.

"I've seen an old friend to-day," said Robert, shortly.

"Indeed?" said Harry, for Linda was unable to speak. The tears were gathering in her eyes. She did not know whether to cry or to sulk, but the predisposition was towards the latter.

"Yes," continued Robert; "and who do you think he was?"

"I really can't guess," said Harry.

"Well, no other than Hugh Hanlon," said Robert.

Both listeners expressed surprise, and Linda almost forgot her sulks in the interest of the revelation.

"Yes; and he's doing capitally," continued Robert.

"I am glad to hear it," said Harry. "I told you on that day when the scene in the bank took place, that he would be driven to rely upon himself, which would restore him to his senses."

"O! yes," said Robert; "we had a famous laugh over that affair; Hugh told me he will never forget the ridiculous figure he cut when he went into heroics."

"And what is he doing now?" asked Harry.

"Leading a splendid life," said Robert: "Not the hum-drum sort I live; his is a glorious independent existence. He got some money from a relative, and went with it under the Verandah, where he's made a little pile in speculating in mining stocks. He's promised to give me the tip now and then. He does a little in betting, too, and has a book on the great sporting events."

"Hu—m," said Harry.

"Oh! Sobersides, I know you'd object to that," said Robert, "but his idea is that everything by which money can be made, so long as it's honest, is right. And all these great bookmakers carry on their operations in a business-like manner. Look at the life he lives, and the life I live. He goes about wherever he pleases all day, drives in his carriage, goes to the opera every night, lives on the best, and does nothing, while I have to stand at a desk the whole live-long day, just getting out in the evening in time to catch the train, and come home to drone away the remainder of the evening."

Drone away the remainder of the evening! Linda felt almost in a passion at that. Was it Robert—"Bobs"—who was speaking?

"Don't speak that way, Bob," said Harry; "his is simply the glory of a day; you will see him abject as ever, for such prosperity is not lasting, while you will go on and on, rising to a higher position, and a larger income, respected by all, and holding an enviable station in society—"

"Yes, whe I'm an interesting old bald-headed man of sixty, and can't enjoy anything except bad temper. [Linda thought he enjoyed that now.] I tell you, Harry, I've seen such fortunes made in mining and betting, that I've half a mind to have a try, too."

"There is nothing like steady industry," said Harry. "The man who hastes to get rich generally falls by the way."

"Oh! It's all very well for you to go on in that style," said Robert impatiently! "You've fallen into a fortune, and become a wealthy man. I don't see how I am to get rich, except by a bold stroke like that of Hugh Hanlon. What a nice thing it is every day to be snubbed by a manager and inspector, and 'kept under.' Well, how long will it be before dinner's ready, Linda; I want to go back to town."

"What to do, Robert?" asked Linda.

Perhaps Bob was going to ask why she wanted to know, for he was in a most unenviable mood; but he stopped himself, and replied that he was going back to make up some accounts.

"I forgot to tell you, Bob," said Linda, who was desirous to make peace, "that we had quite an event here to-day," and she proceeded to recount the battle between Bill and Patsy. Robert listened with an impatience ill-concealed.

"We'll have that boy off, to-morrow," said he, when Linda had finished her narrative; "he's been the companion of bad boys, and beyond a doubt he'll help them to rob us. I shouldn't wonder if we found Valentine and Lucy off some morning."

"I would depend my life on the poor boy," said Linda resolutely. "I know he would lose his life in our service."

"Pshaw," said Robert, who had always had a dislike to poor Bill, though why he could not explain, unless it was that he felt jealous of Linda's doing anything without first consulting him. "I tell you, Linda, I'll pack him off. I don't believe in having Uriah Heeps in my house; the gaol's their proper habitat."

"Well, I'll keep him," said Linda, who, having been a pet, just like Robert, could be equally obstinate; and who felt extremely hurt by the manner in which she had been treated by the one she so passionately loved. We can love very deeply, and yet be very angry with the one we love, more so than with those we care little about.

"You'll keep him," cried Robert, in a loud voice. "This is my house, Linda, and I'll have no one here unless I like."

Now Bob was not exactly right. The house belonged to Linda, to whom it had been given by her brother on her wedding-day. It was a fatal expression, however, to use when the feelings of the two were so intensely irritated, when the first "tiff" between a young couple was on. Linda's temper had risen, and in an unguarded moment, as it were, without thought, as if spoken by some evil spirit that had taken possession of her, she allowed words to slip from her, that, had she foreseen the fearful consequences arising from them, she would have died before she would have uttered.

"I thought it was mine, sir," she said, somewhat sarcastically.

If there was a fault in Robert, it was a tendency to sulk, and a disposition to feel hurt readily, if he loved the aggressor—girls and boys who have been petted have a leaning that way. The effect of these six words was immediate; he sprang up, his face flushing with anger, his whole aspect changed. Rushing into the hall, he snatched his hat off the peg, took his stick out of the

rack; and, standing at the door of the room where the amazed Harry, and the almost hysteric Linda, sat, he said:

"Of course it is, and I'll leave it to you. Good evening. I see my company is not desired."

And he walked rapidly out of the gate towards the railway station.

Thendid Linda realise what she had done. With a wild cry she rushed out to the verandah, and gazed after the retreating figure of her husband; whom, she believed, she had driven from her for ever. She could have cursed herself for what she had done; she could have torn out the unruly member which had worked such ill. Could this be; had Bobs gone off in a passion? Yes, yes; and as the full realisation of her misery overwhelmed her soul like a deluge, Linda fell insensible to the floor.

Already the dark clouds had dimmed the sky, and how soon would the thunder and the lightning roar and flash; how soon would the sun of happiness fade into darkness!

Poor Billy, who was laying the cloth in the adjacent diningroom, had heard all; and now, with poignant feelings of regret and sorrow, he resolved to leave that place where he had been so happy. He would not have that angel who had saved him unhappy for the world. Patsy had had his revenge.

Linda and Harry heard the poor boy's declaration, and did not object. But the noble determination so struck the generous soul of Harry, that he at once resolved to take the boy into his own service, and asked pardon of Heaven for doubting the child's innocence. He strove to comfort Linda, telling her that her husband would soon return, and all would be forgotten. To her earnest request that he would follow Robert, and get him to come back, Harry returned a negative. Nothing would work a cure, said he, so quickly as self-communion. Perhaps so, but it is questionable whether Harry would not have saved his friend had he gone to seek for him that night. Robert was of that nature that he liked to be made much of and sought after. Before Billy left, Harry called him into the parlor, and the boy told his strange eventful history.

Robert strode on to the railway station with a heart agitated with anger, shame, and stubbornness. He knew perfectly well, however indiscreet Linda had been, that he was primarily to blame, for he had gone home that night with a mind thoroughly prepared for a quarrel. But then he had had



cause that day to be irritated. Had not— Would it not be better to return and beg Linda's pardon for his harsh behavior; and then he knew she would fly into his arms and abjectly beg his pardon, and weep away all ill-feeling on his bosom!

He had got to the Balaclava Station as he was thinking thus, and stood surveying the multitude of villas that lay beneath his glance, but not seeing them. He was about to return when the train dashed into the station, and stopped just before him. In the carriage directly in front was Hugh Hanlon. Not the deplorable Hugh Hanlon we have seen in Part I., but a finely-dressed fellow, extremely handsome, with rings and jewellery innumerable, &c. Quite a respectable man! But who, looking into that face, could not detect the marks left by care, dissipation, sin; who could not see the shadow of an irregular life over all? By his side was that beautiful woman we have already introduced. Splendid she looked in her matured beauty, dressed with a taste that suited her style to the minutest particular. One could have noticed that she colored slightly when she saw Robert. So did he when he met her eye.

"Coming to town," said Hugh gaily.

"No—no," stammered Robert.

"Yes, yes," said Hugh. "Come and dine with me at Scott's, and I'll show you round the town. You live too quiet a life."

A sudden desire entered Robert's mind to do this, and make Linda suffer for her behavior. Such desires often enter the minds of those who have a "tiff" with persons they love.

"Come," said Hugh, taking Robert's hand.

Before he well knew what he did, he found himself seated between Hugh and that beautiful siren, and the train whirling away past the little home where poor Linda was weeping and wailing over the first cloud of her young life.

Whirling away to—

What great consequences arise from small events?

### PART III.

#### THE ADVERSARIES' GAME.

[From Marian Lee to Hugh Hanlon.]

"It is now some time since I met you one day in Collins-street, an object so miserable, so degraded, that you feared to meet the eye of an acquaintance. Hollow-cheeked with famine, shivering with cold, what a deplorable creature you appeared! Yet I did not turn

away from you. On the contrary, I gave you the means to appear once more what you were. Many have wondered why I did so, knowing as I did the career which had led to your degradation. But you know me pretty well by this time, and are fully aware that I do nothing without a purpose. Since I began life for myself, I have laid down certain principles up to which I act with more strictness than those persons who call themselves religious. I rescued you for my own ends, and these you know, for I have employed you towards compassing them; unsuccessfully, it is true, up to the present, but succeed you will—succeed you must. Indeed, I must give you the credit that it is to your invention I will owe success, if it is ever mine; for the blundering plans I have laid have always come to grief.

"Yet you cannot comprehend how my whole soul is centred upon the success of the scheme which you have formed to bring Robert within my power. For I love him beyond all. No wanderer in unknown regions of the seas fixed his eye upon the star which he knew to shine above his home more ardently than I on that handsome face and form. In the day, in the midst of business and company, the face is ever present; in the gay night, when wine and wit and music pass away the hours, it is ever with me; in the still night, when solitude is mine, my thoughts are all of him. 'The power of love'—the enthralling spell of an unrequited affection! Ah! the suffering of those who love cannot be understood by others!

"When Robert Wilton was a bright and beautiful boy, budding into youth, I met him, and from that moment my soul has been his. How often have I stood watching him when rowing on the river, playing at manly games with his companions, or walking in the street—watched him with the hunger of one who loved almost without hope! How I have longed for his arms to be around my waist, his lips to my lips, and his heart beating in unison with mine! And yet I did not make his acquaintance then. Had he become my lover, he might have saved me from the fate which is mine; he might have lifted me up to his own sphere. Fallacious dream? But he went on his way, handsome, loving and loved, in the spring of a glorious youth, the pet of all, while I turned into the dark road—but you know all.

"But I was fated to become known to him. We were to meet under very different circumstances to those which I had imagined.

Poor creature, I had dared to dream that he would some day come to me, as I bent over the terrible sewing-machine, and, after denouncing the hard taskmaster under whom I earned my bread, carry me away to love and happiness. But the cold current of this world went on, and we met not as lovers do. And still that meeting, that acquaintance, was to me like the season that in America is called the Indian summer—a blessed period, an oasis in the desert of my life. It was the only bright period of my life—the only dream of mine realised. But why dwell on the short gleam of happiness; the vision is departed, the dream is no more, and I am alone! Yes, alone! though butterflies wing their ephemeral flight ever around me!

“And who destroyed my happiness, who tore my love from me? Who but that girl known as Linda? They say she is beautiful—I cannot acknowledge it. Can that light-headed creature love him as I do, with a passion so strong, so wild, so undying? Has she waited through the day and through the night, in the cold and in the wet, that she might catch a glimpse of the form that was more than life itself? Has she stood upon the brink of the river, and glanced into its sullen depths, ready to hide her sorrows there for love of him? Has she preserved through a life of sin and sorrow one unspotted affection in her heart, pure as the heaven which all hope to reach? Is she ready to sacrifice on the altar of her love all that is sacred, and pure, and holy? Is she prepared to surrender to the loved one all the comforts, the pleasures, the prizes, the friends, she cherishes? No; that faint-hearted creature loves him only as the bright, handsome fellow, whose affection gratified her vanity and gave her a triumph over her less fortunate companions, as the obedient husband who supplies her with all the costly paraphernalia necessary to a modern wife. She love him as I do! No, no no!

“I have already told you that I thoroughly approved of the scheme you have laid before me. The only objection I have to it is the length of time it appears to take to carry out. Have I not supplied you with money to no end, that you might be in a position to carry on your operations; yet I see no signs of the long-looked-for results. You carry things with a high hand, speculate and bet, and have become a notability amongst the so-called ‘talent;’ and at times the suspicion comes across my mind that, having used my money as a ladder whereby to climb, you have flung me away, now that your end is attained.

But you know me! Marian Lee has not lived the life she has, not to be known and feared. If in this you play me false, you will soon find which is the most powerful. As sure as you read these lines, if you turn traitor, another few months will see you the abject wretch you were half-a-year ago—and even worse than that, for, through the police, I know crimes for which you could be put into prison. And no one knows better than yourself the disadvantages that would result from a too close inquiry into your past life. I expect some result, and that very quickly.

“I have failed to find the least traces of my unfortunate family, although I suppose my father and mother are now in nameless graves in that great Melbourne Cemetery. But I would like to find Bell, the companion of my early days, my confidante—sweet sister Bell! Cannot you help me?

“MARIAN LEE.”

[From *Hugh Hanlon to Marian Lee.*]

“Your letter has not taken me by surprise. Knowing as I do your impetuous nature and the wild passion you entertain for Robert, I was quite prepared to receive such a rhodomontade. But, like all women, you are most unreasonable; you make no allowance for time and circumstance; you think all obstacles should be leaped at one effort and the goal attained. How different to this is the ordinary course of life? Objects are only attained by steady perseverance, although I must confess I have always been incapable of practising what I preach now, and know to be right. Your suspicions about my proving unfaithful I forgive; for I know your experiences have been such as to considerably destroy your faith in man or woman.

“If you had given the matter any consideration, you could have easily seen that there are circumstances which make me as anxious to consummate the scheme we devised as yourself. You know that what Robert was to you Linda was to me; that for years I have loved her with a love surpassing yours for him; and that I may attribute my fall solely to the failure of my suit. Had she loved me—had she become mine—I would now be a respectable member of society, as the phrase goes, instead of one at war with it. Robert Wilton stepped in, and took from me the prize which was all in all to me. And do you think I have forgiven him or forgotten? I tell you, Marian, that, notwithstanding the way in which people laugh at the idea of revenge nowadays, that passion is stronger in my breast than

any other. Had he not added one insult more to the many injuries I have suffered at his hands, I might have forgotten all. But when I was a poor, wretched, hungry waif in Collins-street, he flung me from him; he refused to give me even a sixpence to purchase food—he who was in comfort, well fed, well clothed. He did this; and never, as long as I live, shall I forgive or forget that moment. You it was who were the Good Samaritan that day—you whom men call by the hardest names—you were the only one to rescue a creature on the brink of desperation. And, bad as I may be, can I forget that act, although the feelings which prompted you may not have been of the best?

“But to this desire of revenge on the man whom I hate there is added my unalterable love for that beautiful creature Linda, whom you hate. Of her I can write as you did of Robert. I thought I had conquered that powerful passion which consumed my soul in my brightest years; but I have discovered it burns as strongly as ever, and needs but the presence of the beloved object to blaze forth wild as of yore. You know my feelings when we witnessed these two made one; you know the wild paroxysm that seized upon me. Since then, I have often sought the face of the one I love so dearly. Unholy and improper love it may be, it is called, but what do I care? I have stood where I could not be observed, and watched that beautiful face with all the feelings that agitated my breast years ago. Yes, Marian, I have absolutely stood outside the drawing-room window at Robert's villa, and gazed upon the scene of happiness I witnessed there, much in the manner of Satan (if there is such an individuality, which you and I doubt—I trust we shall not find to the contrary one of those days,) when looking at Eden. Yes; I have watched and thought how I could change that scene; and I know the scheme propounded will do it. I could tell you of three men once as happy and prosperous as Robert, now irrevocably gone. And to this purpose I settle myself as firmly as if it were most proper and benevolent. I have twofold reasons—love and hate; and in my nature such passions are too powerful to be disobeyed. Could you but see into my heart, and notice the rage, the malice, the disappointment there, when I gazed upon these two beings so happy in each other's love, you would never doubt me, Marian; and there is still another reason, perhaps the best of all, for gold is ever the master of man after he passes the threshold of youth. This scheme, which will

beggar Robert and throw Linda upon my mercy—this scheme, Marian, will make me rich, and raise me above want, for I am resolved, if I make a fortune again, I will not lose it. I have been very successful in shares recently, having bought into Golden Fleece stock when low. I can repay you the money advanced, unless you think it only fair remuneration for the happiness and triumph which will be yours.

“I have succeeded, owing to the able assistance of one of our fraternity, well versed in such matters, in putting Robert's accounts into confusion. How? you will ask. To-morrow afternoon, I will meet you at Brighton, and I will tell you.

“As I have told you several times, I know nothing about your family, although I have made inquiries. I have told Detective Meddle to look out for them. In our present engrossing pursuit I thought you had forgotten everything else.

“HUGH HANLON.”

[From Marian Lee to Hugh Hanlon.]

“I will meet you at Brighton to-morrow, when I hope to hear all the details about your plans.

“As you are aware, I give a party to-morrow night, when all the ‘talent,’ as you call them, and numbers of others, will be present. O! could Robert be there!”

“MARIAN LEE.”

#### PART IV.

##### A LARRIKIN'S LIFE.

Robert's drawingroom was a perfect gem. His and Linda's taste had combined to make it an apartment with which the most fastidious could not find fault. When the curtains were drawn at night, and the world excluded, the softened beams of the lamp lit up a chamber furnished faultlessly, color and tone thoroughly harmonising, and a general air of comfort and repose dwelling on everything, that would calm the most perturbed mind, speaking powerfully of HOME. Sorrow should be far from such a consecrated spot. But it was not that night, when Linda awoke from the sweet dream of her married life, as some dreamer who has waked from a vision of brightness and beauty, to find the cold grey light of dawn breaking over a chilled and miserable world, instead of warm radiance suffusing a glittering palace. Alas! such awakenings must be; pity the dream is so brief! Linda lay on the couch, pale, but inexpressibly

lovely, listening to the narrative of the out-cast boy she had saved, trying in his story to forget the terrible shadow of her own life. Trying—vain effort, when her soul was far away, following that dear fellow she so passionately loved! How she longed to hear his step on the verandah, to feel his arms around her, to have his lips to hers. But it is a question whether had Bobs come then, if she would not have sulked and gone to bed without speaking to him. Harry listened with deep interest to Billy. He was studying the various phases of humanity, and here was one that would enable him to grasp the life of the only class in Australia who may be called unhappy, often not through faults of their own but of their parents. Billy did his best to speak well, and to give a faithful narrative of his sad experiences.

"The first thing I remember," said Billy, "is living in a little weatherboard cottage somewhere out in Collingwood. I don't recollect much about it, but I know there was good furniture, and that we had a comfortable bed to sleep in, and plenty of every thing. There was sister Mary; she was big, and worked at a place in Flinders-lane. What awe I used to feel when sister Bell, who was a few years older than I, would take me down for a walk, and show me where Polly worked. Polly was very, very handsome, sir; I never saw such a splendid girl; her style was so grand that the folks around nicknamed her Queen Mary. Bell was very different, like a little daisy, as I've read in books, so shy and modest, but so loving; she never touched us—baby and I—or spoke harshly as Polly, who thought she was too good for us, did. I loved her, and so did 'wee Popsy,' as my youngest sister was called. Such a queer little girl she was, never anything but a mite of a thing, but so old-fashioned that our play-mates christened her also 'Little Granny.' Father was a carpenter, doing well, and mother helped him in different ways. I've often thought, Sir, I have seen happy days here, and some people would say a pleasanter picture could not be than master and mistress in this room, but I have seen very, very happy times at home. When tea was over, and mother, Polly, and Bell began sewing, and father read the paper to them, while Popsy and I played about on the carpet—why, Sir, that was happiness. On Sundays, too, they would take us out to Stndley Park, and in spring-time how we enjoyed running about under the wattles, gathering the blossoms, and romping on the green grass, or

watching the crowds of gay people passing and repassing. But this was not to last. If it had, sir, I would now be very different, and would never have suffered what I did. This is how it came about. Father joined a sort of club they formed at the corner publichouse, and began to be so irregular that mother grew afraid, and got him to move away to another place. I was too young then to know how it occurred, but this I understood, that from that time everything went wrong with the family. Father lost his place, owing to his employers becoming insolvent. Then, too late, mother discovered we had bad neighbors. They were continually drinking, and the landlord of a little publichouse close by was one of those jolly fellows who draw everyone into their places. The neighbors soon made father follow their example, and he was continually to be found in the hotel. He gradually became a drunkard. Mother hadn't the way to win him back; she blew him up continually, until at last he became very harsh, and over and over threatened to beat her. He never had steady work, because he was looked upon as not to be relied on. Polly began to dress well, and had several silk dresses. Fine young fellows used to see her home. One day when mother was out, father, who was at home in a very bad temper, because he could not get drink, took these dresses to a pawnbroker's, and got some money on them. When Polly came there was a terrible do, and while she was complaining father arrived. He was set on to by both mother and Polly, but he soon sent them flying, smashed the furniture, and drove us all out. I never saw Polly after that night. Mother, Popsy, Bell, and I got shelter in a neighbor's place until father was quiet enough to allow us to return. But after that I did not know a happy day. Father went hopelessly to the bad, and mother followed. They paid no attention to us little ones. Poor Bell they drove off to work at a sewing-machine, and every Saturday night took away her earnings to be spent in beer. As for Popsy and I, we were half-fed and half-clothed. We again changed our place of living, and came to live in a little lane in the middle of the city. There I made the acquaintance of the boys the newspaper people call larrikins. They weren't called larrikins then. These were all boys like myself, who had no one to look after them, and did just as they liked. They taught me to do everything that is bad, but I had something of the old feeling left, and



would never let little Popsy amongst them. Even if she had mingled with them I believe their ways would have had no effect, for her mind was naturally pure. Patsy Quinlan was the cleverest of our gang, and he it was who led me into evil. But our great example and head man was Bob Smith, older than any of us. Sir, example is everything in this world. The young tradesman has before him others in the same workshop who are receiving high wages, and are in high favor; the young gentleman has the successful scholars to spur him on. And what had we, sir? Bob Smith! Yes, he was our great man. There was not a boy in the lot who didn't look to the period when he could smoke a cigar, wear flash clothes, drink what he liked, and be hand and glove with certain persons, as Bob Smith was, as the very tip top of the ladder. They couldn't go a step further; that was glory enough for a whole lifetime. And that ambition, Sir, we followed, and the most of them have attained it. Patsy and I entered into a match partnership, although I believe he regularly cheated me out of half what I earned. Indeed I fancy that's why he was so great a friend of mine; Patsy couldn't be sweet with anyone if it didn't suit his purpose. That's why he was so sorry when I left him. I earned a bit of money, however, and managed to keep it out of my parents' way, taking little 'Granny' to a pieshop whenever I could, and treating her. Why, sir, (here the boy's eyes filled with tears) I'd give any money for the pleasure the little thing gave me when she had had something nice, and looked up into my face with those sweet eyes. It was the only happiness I had. It used to hurt me, though, to notice how pale and thin and old she grew, just as if she had all the cares of the house on her mind. And she had, too; for little as she was, she often had to cook, and to see her set the table would have made you laugh, I can tell you. It was not long before another misfortune took place. One night, when Popsy and I were asleep, I awoke to find Bell standing over the bed kissing us. I asked what was the matter, but all she replied was 'Go to sleep, Billy; go to sleep.' I saw she was crying. Then she left us, and I never saw Bell again. How dark grew our home (if I can call it so) then. Nothing but Popsy made me stay; as it was I had to stand lots of chaff about being a molly-coddle and so on. But I stood out boldly, and I believe the best of them liked me for sticking to the little thing. Once I made

some money. The *Argus* published an extraordinary, and there was a great deal of excitement. Popsy's clothes were very tattered, so I made up my mind to treat her to a new rig out—hat, boots, and all. When I brought it home mother and father were sober, and didn't they praise me! I was near bursting with delight when I took little Popsy for a stroll that night, and she prattled about her new clothes and looked so well in them. But when I came home next evening father and mother were helplessly intoxicated, and there was poor little Popsy in her old clothes sitting on the doorstep. They had taken off her good clothes and pawned them. I was in a fearful rage, and swore never to come home again. But after a fortnight's knocking about I couldn't resist the longing to see dear 'Granny,' so one moonlight night I crept up the lane, in the shadow, to our place. All was still. There was little Popsy sitting on the doorstep, just as of old. I went up to her. She took no notice of me. She must be asleep. I put my arms around, knelt down, and kissed her. O! God; she was dead, dead, cold as a stone!"

The boy here burst into tears, overmastered by the recollections of that last event which severed him from society, and drove him into the life from which he had been rescued by Linda.

"Yes," continued Billy, "they were all gone—Polly, Bell, and little Popsy—and I—"

Here there was a knock at the door. Mrs. Moran came in.

"Please, ma'am," said that worthy female, who was in considerable trepidation, "there's two or three people at the gate, and two of them are policemen, I'm sure they are."

"O! save me, Mrs. Wilton," cried Billy in terror; "it's that dreadful Patsy, he's got the policemen to take me up. O! save me."

"What can we do?" cried Linda distractedly.

"Don't be afraid," said Harry calmly. "Come with me, Billy; we will go out by the back gate and escape. Good night Linda, good night; don't be troubled about Bobs; he'll be back early, and you'll forget all about your troubles. The reconciliation will be all the sweeter. Ah! there they are. Come, Billy. Good night, Linda."

And he hurried away. Poor Billy could not but pass with regret out of the house which had sheltered him, from the presence of her who had saved him, and taught him

higher hopes and aspirations. But there was no time for leave-taking, so he had to leave all the charges he was so fond of—Lucy, Valentine, Scrux, and Snix—without seeing them for the last time.

They had barely got out at the back gate when Patsy and the policemen entered.

"We're come, please maam," said the senior, "to sarch for a blaguard of a boy named Billy Dawson, who's a regular larrikin."

Linda motioned them out with her hand.

"He is not here," she said; "he has gone. Search for him."

"Thank you, ma'am," said the police, and away they went, ransacking every likely and unlikely spot for poor Billy, seeking him and finding him not.

"Look here you larrikin," said the policeman, turning round when his patience was thoroughly exhausted, "you've been dalin' wrong with us, playin' thricks"—

He spoke to empty air. Patsy, knowing that policemen disliked bootless errands, and would, if disappointed in Billy, take him up quite as readily, had quietly vanished.

"The divil!" cried the policeman, as he walked out of the gate, "whin I catch ye, it'll not be good for you, I'll swear. I'll set Detective Meddle on your track, I will, and he'd catch the divil himself."

"Yis," responded his companion, "an' let him go agin if he gave him a sovereign."

"Sinsible man," was the reply; and the men vanished in the shadows of the street.

And all that long dreary night Linda watched and waited in her room for Robert. All the night upbraiding herself and weeping bitterly! The dawn found her with red eyes and sunken cheeks, still weeping. Chill and cold was the morning air; but not more so than the heart of the once happy Linda.

## PART V.

### LIBIAMO! LIBIAMO!

On towards the great city, glimpses of which were obtainable out of the carriage windows, steamed the train that bore Robert away from Linda; on past the quiet suburbs, over the black river, by the gardens and dreary swamp, until it reached Melbourne, and disgorged the travellers as if it were a new Trojan horse. During that journey, short as it was, what changes had been wrought in the young man's mind. Seated between Hugh Hanlon and Marian Lee what thoughts, what dreams of the past rose before his mind, what shadows of the future!

He remembered the fascination of that beautiful woman when they met first, and the glamour which his fervid young mind had cast over her surroundings; the chain which she had wound around his soul until Linda's powerful influence snapped it asunder, base metal as it was. Yet what bright and glowing colors lingered around these reminiscences; what rosy clouds hovered over them, concealing the deep shades behind, the demons and darkness, the traps and pitfalls. Then came back the pitiless present, and brilliant as was the conversation of his companions, he could not but again run over in his mind that puzzle which had bewildered his brain during the past few days. It would come; like the spectre at the feast, it rose though not invited. When Harry had given up his situation, owing to the change in his fortune, Robert had been made the cashier of the bank. He had done well until the last few days, when to his surprise he found that there was £300 short in the cash. In vain he ran over his books, made calculation after calculation, totted up rows of figures long enough to measure across the street, and still the result came out the same—£300 short. Never had he known such agony of mind. Two days and the manager would count his cash, perhaps he might do it at any moment, and then, and then—the prespiration broke out from every pore as Robert thought of it, the cold drops came to his forehead. Not even to Linda had he said a word of the terrible fate that was hanging over him. He had hardly slept. The moment he dozed off visions of gaols, hangmen, and gallows, thronged around him, and he awoke in a cold sweat. At dawn he rose to cover all the papers in his study with figures, to consult arithmetics, and to find the result still £300 short—£300! It stood out before him like a sentence of doom; wherever he turned his eyes, there the dreadful figures met him. The night before he had fallen into a troubled slumber, and a peaceful dream had been vouchsafed to his eyes; he totted up the totals, and the sum came out right. What a fool he had been, troubling his head about an evil that did not exist! He would rush home and tell Linda. He awoke to find that it was only a dream, a mocking phantasy. That day he had been in a state of mind next to lunacy. He imagined every eye in the banking house was fixed on him, and when a detective entered to cash a cheque his heart gave such a leap that he thought he was going to die. No wonder he had been irritated; no wonder he had done

what he had. His mind was so fretted, overwrought, desperate, that it seemed to him the only rest he could obtain would be by indulging in a wild night. Already the brandy bottle had been applied to, but it had given poor stimulus. It seemed to him that so intense was the irritation and excitement of his mind that stimulants had no effect. But a real night of excitement such as Hugh and he had occasionally had years ago would give temporary relief, and to-morrow he would make another effort to unravel that dreadful mystery. Linda's words had kindled another fire in his heart, and Hugh's demeanour had finished the work. Misfortunes, thought Robert, never come singly; the two dearest to him in the world had deserted him in his sorest need. He never thought of the cause he had given; he only dwelt in his despair on his version. For the first time doubts of that friend who had been to him more than any other being could have been entered his heart, and were welcomed there by the evil spirits which had made it their dwelling lately. Yes; he would stay away that night and show her he felt her conduct. Let her have the house to herself until she would be glad to come and beg him to return, and he would never speak to Harry until he had explained to him why he was so often at his house when he was out. Robert determined upon this with a sort of grim pleasure, such as a maniac feels when he tears his own flesh. There are times, when the mind is highly irritated, when doing oneself a positive mental or bodily injury gives a savage satisfaction. Robert was in that state of mind. Next day he would be early in the bank and again go over those terrible figures; surely they would come out right. If not, he knew not what to do. Where was he to raise £300 in two days? The young couple had lived extravagantly; there had been a lot of what is known as "showing off," and now Robert was in debt everywhere, and the house, that which Linda had so sillily called her own, was mortgaged. Where was the money to come from? Linda's father had gone bankrupt quite recently, and help from him was hopeless; and as to Harry, he would not apply to him, for already he was heavily in his debt; besides, in Robert's present state of mind, he would not apply to the friend who would have given treble the sum without a word. So strangely are we constituted. What was he to do—what was he to do? Pshaw; why think of it to-night? It could not be helped by brooding over it forever. Let him rush into pleasure and forget

the horrible thing; let him drown it in song and dance, and wit and laughter, in music and revelry, in the fellowship of the gay, in the smiles of beauty. There was no harm in it—no harm; it would do him good and raise his spirits, and he would forget that ever-present £300, that spot "Black as ten furies, horrible as hell." He had lived too quiet a life; he had moped in loneliness with only Linda and Harry. Why not enjoy himself like others? He was old enough now to know when to stop. The moth always thinks it can play around the candle without getting singed. Yes, he would drown care in Moet and Chandon, or Cliquot, and forget the past, the present, and the future.

"You go on to St. Kilda at once?" said Hugh, as the train stopped with a bump amidst considerable rasping and grinding, and puffing as if the engine were complaining of being checked.

The query was addressed to Marian.

"Yes," she replied, in a voice whose deep but musical accents rang on the ear like silver bells, pervading the soul with sweet thoughts, and fascinating the heart. "Dreaming, Mr Wilton?" she continued, in an even gentler and more musical tone. "Ah! the cares of this world soon follow marriage."

Dreaming! How Hugh Hanlon had watched that dream, knowing, as he did, what it was; glorying, as he did, over the suffering of the poor boy he had once loved so well. So does evil change the soul!

"I am rather thoughtful, to-day," said Robert, as they stepped on to the platform; "indeed, you must excuse my being so absent, Marian"—here he hesitated; it was long since he had uttered her name—"in fact, I have a little trouble on my mind, just a mere trifle, but I am such a fellow, and make mountains of molehills."

"Molehills," said Hugh, not loud enough to be heard, "you will find them very difficult to surmount."

"Yes," said Marian, with a musical laugh, floating on the air like the cadence of an air heard in a delicious dream; "yes, you married people have much to trouble you. But if you like I have a panacea at hand: to-night I give a little party; come and enjoy yourself, as in the old times, the days gone by, when we were so happy. Nothing stiff, nothing formal, only fun and frolic, music and gaiety. Will you come Robert—Bobs?"

As she spoke, so low, her hand rested on his, her full, brown eyes were fixed upon him, and eloquently pleaded, while the wonderfully beautiful face uplifted to his seemed, in the



light of the setting sun, that of a Peri, of one not of this dull, cold world, but of the realms of imagination, the Shadow Land where dwells Perfection. Who could resist that spell of fearful power, who could turn away and refuse the gentle request? Not Robert. The single word, "Bobs," — the name those lips had so often gently breathed in days gone by—had power to bind him. He took her hand and said that he would go. Their eyes met, and the contract was sealed. Soul spoke to soul in language mortals understand, but cannot speak. He trembled as the delicate hand touched his, but O! what delicious joy was hers; the blood danced through her veins, her heart beat wildly, her eyes gleamed brightly. Her dream was coming true; he was with her once more. What need she care for the past, for the future, when the man who was all in all to her stood again at her side!

"At ten o'clock" were the last words that fell on Robert's ears, as the train sped away in the gathering darkness. But those beautiful eyes had done their work, and long after the train had vanished they were present with him. Again the fatal fascination was working. Was it not strange that when he turned his eyes back from following the train the first thing that attracted his attention was the light on the semaphore, signifying "Danger?"

In the swiftly-coming darkness, Hugh stood beside Robert, busy as he in thinking. Back to him came the remembrance of that past in which both had played such parts. How often in the still twilight, emblem of the final close of life, the last Gathering of the Shadows, does there come to the soul with tenfold force the memory of the days that are gone. On that platform stood these two young men, busy with thickly coming recollections, painting mental picture after picture of the Past, over which the Future shed a lurid light. Hugh thought of the days when he had stood on this same platform cold and shivering, wretched and miserable, at war with himself and the world, which shrank from him as if he were a leper. He had seen the man who stood beside him now shrink away from him and take his seat in the train, desirous of getting out of his sight. And now he was in his power, he who had spurned him, the man who had stolen from him the love of his life. The times had changed.

"Come, come," said Hugh, hastily, "why are we standing here; dinner must be ready by this time. You shall dine with me at

my own house, Bobs, instead of at Scott's, and you'll see, old boy, how folks like me live. Of course we are in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity, but we manage to make matters very agreeable. Come on, Bobs."

"This is bringing back the old time," said Robert, as he took Hugh's arm. "The old times, Hugh, the old times! Ah! how changed we are. Six years ago, when you and Harry and I were boys together, who would have thought in so short a time to have seen such changes?"

"This is a world of changes," was the reply. "But what says the opera?"

"*Il segreto per esse felici!*"

Yes, my boy, the secret of life is content. It is good philosophy."

They had reached Collins-street. Hugh beckoned a hansom, and in a few seconds they were tearing up the street, past the shops radiant with light, the pavements crowded with people, the silent deserted gardens. The moon was rising over the ranges, and cast her gentle light upon the busy scene, paling the garish gaslight. It was a strange, thought-evoking phantasmagoria. The hansom stopped at a gay-looking balconied house in a fashionable suburb filled with light.

Dinner was just ready, laid out in a room glittering with glass, lit with a splendid chandelier. There was nothing here but what was bright and gay and attractive. The carpet, like velvet turf to the tread; the pictures, representing Grecian and sylvan scenes; the statuettes; the articles of *vertu*; all spoke of mirth and gladness and joy, of merry hearts and smiling faces. But it was not a bachelor's dinner. At the end of the table there was a pale but extremely beautiful girl, whose bright pleasant face and cheery laughter cast a charm around that which would have been sadly wanting otherwise, for the faces were not all of the joyous stamp. Dark-browed Jews, with grasping noses; dissipated-looking young men, whose eyes were wild with excitement, bearing a resemblance to that man who is said to have wandered to and fro seeking rest and finding none; keen business-like men, who seemed calculating how they could successfully fill their pockets out of those of the others. It was a strange assemblage, and a stranger conversation.

"Who'll win the Cup?" asked a son of Abraham, whose nose formed almost a perfect beak.

"The first boss," said a young gentleman, who was evidently of horses, horsey.

"Rather," said Detective Meddle, who sat in the place of honor, "the horse on which the ring have put their money."

"What I complain of," said a fat vulgar-looking man at the end of the table, "is the division there's in the talent now. There's nothing but disputing, and trying to get the better of one another—no honor, gentlemen, no honor. It wasn't so once. Why, I knew the time when things used to be arranged two weeks before the race; now it's not done two minutes before the start. Why, it's only the other day when the Bilking Stakes were run for that the big people disputed so amongst themselves as to who should have the most of the spoil that the horses started before the jockeys got instructions, and see the pot the ring lost!"

"Served them right," said a young fellow, who was evidently a neophyte.

"Hear, hear," cried two or three other callow birds.

"Moet and Chandon," cried Hugh; and when the fizzing liquor had come he poured a bumper into Robert's glass.

"This is enjoyment," thought Robert; "this is life. How I have missed the pleasures of this existence in the humdrum life I have led. This is the only true way of escaping care when it weighs us down so heavily!"

Ah! Robert, have you never watched the flash of the brilliant meteor as it coursed across the sky, the admiration and wonder of thousands, only to explode into fragments and lie for ever after cold and unnoticed in the earth?

Glass after glass of Moet and Chandon was taken by Robert, whose blood became heated. His brain whirled with excitement. Glorious juice of the grape, what life there is in thee; how thou liftest the heart, clears the brain, brightens the eyes, elevates the soul! O! mockery, mockery.

As the potent wine circulated the conversation grew fast and furious—the fun was uproarious. No stiff dinner table this—no formal party. Free were the people and free the conversation—hence the great danger and charm to youth.

Eight had struck before the dinner was over.

"We have time enough to have a short game before going to the ball," said Detective Meddle, as they rose from the table, some flushed and excited, others cool and calculating as ever.

"Of course, of course," cried the neophytes, with wild enthusiasm. An adjournment was

at once made to the drawingroom, which was furnished, if possible, more faultlessly than the other, but in a different and a more sensuous style.

"I have no money on me," said Robert, as Hugh asked him to sit at one of the tables.

"Pshaw," said Hugh, "here's a fifty-pound note. Consider me your banker."

Robert's heart beat quick. What if this would bring to him the £300 he wanted? Would it not be glorious to rise a winner of £300, and to rush to the bank to-morrow morning the first thing and put it in his cash. O! what a relief inexpressible. Even now he anticipated his feelings. On all the tables rolls of notes and piles of gold and silver were forming. He would go in—only this once!

"Only this once!"

Fatal words.

"Play, gentlemen," said Detective Meddle.

"*Libiamo, Libiamo!*" cried Hugh, as he poured out a sparkling glass of Cliquot for Robert.

## PART VI.

### FOR EARTHLY PASSIONS' SAKE.

"There's a power whose sway  
Angel souls adore,  
And the lost obey,  
Weeping evermore!"

After playing for an hour and a half, when it was announced that it was time to start for St. Kilda, Robert rose from the loo table, flushed, excited, his heart beating high, and his £50 increased to £200. Never had he enjoyed an evening like this. It was like a delicious dream, a leaf torn from the book of love and pleasure. Before that night was over he would be the winner of perhaps £500; then he could settle that cursed £300, and be at ease once more. He would not go home to Linda and the quiet cottage that night: he would stay with Hugh, and thoroughly humble that rebellious little puss. What had he to fear? Surely he was able to take care of himself, and judge when he had gone too far. Surely, indeed! And Marian Lee! Pshaw! Beautiful, fascinating; but surely he was a man. Of course!

The carriage was at the door as the crowd of revellers walked out into the moonlight. Robert and Hugh sprang in, and the others sought different modes of conveyance, some by cab, others by their own carriages, the most by train.

The carriage, with its spanking bays, dashed past the gardens into the flare of Bourke-street, somewhat chastened by the

glorious moon, which was moving gently across the blue sky; down Swanston-street, and out into the St. Kilda-road, leaving behind the great busy city, and seeking the spot where high revel was to be held that night. What an additional intoxication there was in this whirling past such varied and exciting scenes behind two speedy horses, on, on to mirth and gaiety!

"Hugh, this is like a dream!" said Robert. "Who could have imagined that you, who were so badly off six months ago, would have changed your position so quickly, and become what you are. Don't be offended, old fellow, but really I must make the remark. It would seem as if you were possessed of the talisman celebrated in Eastern story, which so many follow, so few grasp."

"Nonsense," said Hugh, taking out his cigar-case, "it is in the hand of every clever and daring man in Victoria. My dear boy, this is the land of rapid fortunes, of transformations, of which even Oriental visionaries never dreamt. The dashing, the adventurous, the far-sighted have every chance. It is a country where everything is increasing in value. Land is becoming dearer every day, mines are rising in price, wool presents a fertile field of speculation, grain fluctuates, merchandise is subject to rises and falls. Once get possession of a little capital, once be able to go in and swamp the market—no matter what market—in any particular commodity, and your fortune is made."

"Ah! but to get possession of that little capital is the rub," said Robert. "By the by, here's your £50, Hugh."

"Oh, keep it until the night is over," said Hugh, carelessly. "Gambling is just like any other speculation; the man who has the most money, and can 'brag,' comes off best. That's where some fellows make the mistake; they go in with a few pounds, which they are sure to lose. The successful *coup* is all that is wanted."

"But how to make the successful *coup* is what puzzles me," said Robert. "Here I have been drudging away for years, and now, instead of having any money, I am actually in debt."

"And will be so *ad infinitum*, unless you make an effort to put a little money together," said Hugh.

"Harry is always preaching about saving," said Robert, pettishly. "Upon my conscience I am getting tired of him, he's so terribly good."

"Yes," said Hugh, with a grim smile, which not even the flowing bumpers of

champagne he had imbibed could render pleasant, "he used to save 10s a week when we were boys in receipt of £2 per week. He's too good, altogether. But if you want to get out of debt, Robert, and render yourself independent of these d— inspectors and managers, go in on the quiet for a little speculation."

"A capital idea," said Robert; "but you don't show me how. As you say, it is galling to be under these fellows. There's Calculus, the inspector, it's more than my nerves can stand to see him poring over the books, and poking his long nose into everything, besides keeping you for hours dancing attendance on the old curse. Then, though old Overdraw is rather a kind sort of person, its sufficient to try anyone's temper the way he fidgets around. He pretends to be very fond of me, but the fruit of his affection appears to be only extra admonition and annoyance. But how am I to make a rise?"

"Leave that until we get to Eros Cottage," said Hugh. "The company that was assembled at my house to-night was only the outsiders of the great body that prey successfully on that booby, the public. With the exception of Detective Meddle, the *amicus curiæ*, not one was worthy of notice. Wait until you see the worthies assembled in our Walhalla, under the ægis of the fair enchantress who sways them all, and then I will give you such a history of them as will open your eyes to the folly of humdrum."

"And then it is the public who have to pay for all the grandeur people like you live in?" said Robert.

"None other," replied Hugh, with a dry laugh. "My dear fellow—have another cigar, delicious, ain't they—My dear boy, all clever men live on the public, although some do it in a reputable manner, according to the world, while others are not too particular—yours obediently in the latter class. Clergymen, doctors, lawyers, politicians, and so forth make a comfortable living out of the booby. We attack him in another way; we place before him the prospect of overreaching his neighbor to his own gain, and, presto! he snaps at the bait, and finds, too late, the laugh on the other side. Believe me, cupidity or selfishness is the great passion of humanity, and you are safe in playing upon it. There is no other chord in the human heart which can give forth such agreeable music in the hands of a skilful performer. We play upon it by means of mining, betting, gambling, and I assure you, make a very fair living. But the secret is how to play upon it, and

that you have to learn. Yet it is a golden rule that all men are at heart, cheats. When you go into the market it is little use unless you can persuade purchasers that they are getting the better of you. Apply the rule to your transactions with mankind in general, always making it work to your advantage, and wealth is yours."

"Well, Hugh, you have changed," said Robert, wonderingly. "I could hardly believe you were the same person."

"Rubbing against the world changes one very quickly," replied Robert. "You lose all your romantic notions without loss of time. But here we are, here is Eros Villa."

The carriage stopped in front of a pleasant villa, embowered in a wealth of leaf and blossom that gave it a rural appearance. Within there was music and light, without, the moon shone softly on the graceful forms of shrub and tree and statue. Not far distant, the bay was sleeping in the moonlight. It was very beautiful, this scene.

They were met on the threshold by the mistress of the villa. Never had Robert imagined a being so fascinatingly beautiful. It seemed as if this were a continuation of the dream of that night. Flushed, excited, as he was he could hardly realise he was awake.

"Does not Marian look splendid to-night," said Hugh when they were alone, preparing to enter the ball-room.

"Splendid," said Robert in a dreamy tone, "it is no word for her, beautiful, enchanting, supreme."

Again the strange smile came over Hugh's face.

"Eh," said he laughing, "poetry must be resorted to. What think you—Marian

*'With hours might vie,  
Love lives in the light of her laughing darkeye,  
Her lips seem to promise all Heaven in a kiss.  
You might die on her bosom, and think death a bliss.  
Each moment reveals of her form some new grace,  
And the world you forget when you look in her face.'*"

"Hush," said Robert, who was in some measure recovering, the ride through the night air having sobered him, "you must not talk like that."

"No harm," said Hugh, "surely you can enjoy yourself without being a fool. Marian is a magnificent woman and rich, too; I often wonder how it is she has not married to advantage some gay young 'talent,' but when I remember one thing I am not surprised."

"And what is that," asked Robert, who had now given a finishing touch to his hair.

"That she has loved as I have, and that her love has not been requited. Robert, this woman loved you beyond all ordinary love."

"Pshaw," said Robert, with a laugh, "what of that; I suppose she has forgotten all about it now. Women soon forget these things."

And yet these words did not pass so lightly. There is no man or woman who can hear unmoved that they are loved; it is always pleasing to find that another is fond of us, often the greatest enjoyment is when the loved one knows the lover has no hope. Such poor, vain creatures we are!

As Robert passed through the house to the ballroom he could not but be struck with the evidences of ease and wealth, and in the bitterness of his heart he reflected on the incongruity of fate, which gave such riches to Marian and denied them to him who worked so industriously,

It had happened to Robert as to many others of the sanguine temperament. When first he entered upon life, the prospect of an increase in pay and independence was held out to him, and so he worked on. Then came his love for Linda, and he worked on, that the desire of his heart might be accomplished. Wedded to Linda, he thought life could give no more. But then, when the charm wore off, he discovered that the old life had to be continued with a worse prospect than ever, and then came discontent. Whenever the pendulum begins to calculate how many times it has to swing before it can rest, the whole clockwork is disarranged. It is dangerous to become dissatisfied. Reflection, unless properly directed, does not always result advantageously.

The ballroom was gaily fitted up. Wreaths of flowers were everywhere, bright devices, harmony of color, agreement of everything. As Robert and Hugh entered, a dance had been concluded and the company were promenading. A motley crowd they were. Marian was occupied with a small coterie at the end of the room.

"Let us stand here," said Hugh, "it will be best to give you a little insight into the different characters, before you join. Ah! there's Detective Meddle, you have met him already. He is a man to be admired, despised, and feared. Raised from the very lowest grade of the police force by his subserviency and Paul Pry proclivities, he now holds the fates of all the irregular characters in Melbourne in his hands. It lies in his power to make things exceedingly uncomfortable for half the people here."

At that moment the detective's glance happened to fall upon Hugh. There was at times on his face an indescribable expression, like that of a hawk when about to swoop on



some smaller bird of prey, which chilled to the soul the guilty. And Hugh quailed beneath the glance, and turned pale.

"Strange," said Detective Meddle to himself, "strange; I know nothing against this man, yet I often find my glance distracts him. Strange!"

And the detective absolutely spoiled an ingenious card calculation, to turn over in his acute mind any circumstances that might explain what was now so inexplicable to him.

"Yes," continued Hugh, after recovering himself, "but like a sensible man, he never interferes with those who make it worth his while in one way or another. You will find him in all the haunts of Melbourne, and there is not one of the 'talent' to whom he is a stranger."

"But how can he explain his presence in such places?" said Robert. What if his superior officers knew?"

"What if they did?" replied Hugh, "his ready explanation is that he is watching for prey. You see detectives have an exceptional excuse for being anywhere. But as to his superiors they are very glad to let him do as he pleases, for it would not always do to follow them too closely."

"You surprise me," said Robert. "It seems those who are paid to prevent irregularity foster it. Can this be possible?"

"O, not the way you put it, exactly," said Hugh, "but in another way. But I will give Detective Meddle this credit, that no one knows better when a man has crossed the line that separates safe wickedness from folly. He admires and caresses the man who works the oracle with impunity, but he is the eternal foe of the booby who is fool enough to be found out. Such a man, although he had been his bosom friend a few hours before, he would mercilessly arrest and bring to shame. A deep man is Detective Meddle a man to be admired, despised and feared."

"How to be despised?" asked Robert.

"Because of all men he is the most contemptible," replied Hugh. "He has no probity, no honor—not even that amongst the thieves; he will use anything, even the most sacred confidences, against you; will not scruple at any means of criminating you; will bow down at the shrine of a successful schemer, while he will persecute to the death the unfortunate. Once how gladly that man would have laid hands on me: now no one fawns so servilely at my feet. Pah! Even I can despise him. Let us pass on to the others."

In the corner stood three Israelitish-looking men: the tallest was a vulgar-looking man, with a coarse face, but keen business eyes. The second was more in the Lothario style, thin-faced and rakish-looking, but still distinguished by a keen business appearance like his brother.

"These men," said Hugh, with a sort of angry snort; "these men, Robert, are the most successful turfites in this colony. What they were years ago I really don't know, but my impression is that the worthies were once fishhawkers, if they did not pursue less reputable avocations. But for a genuine specimen of the sporting class, let me introduce you to this man."

He pointed to a *gentleman* who sat in a free-and-easy style at the end of the room, surrounded by a little court of flatterers and neophytes. This individual's face had evidently met with sundry misfortunes in early life—at least, it was not so handsome as might be expected. The low cunning, brute wit, and daring effrontery in this man's face can hardly be done justice to. There he sat, a king amongst minnows, a king by virtue of his cheque-book, the admiration of the moths of the sporting world and the poorer members; despised by all who knew him, yet feared. To be like Metallic Megatherium was the great ambition of every sporting youth in the colony.

"Now for a right straight up and down shameless rogue," said Hugh, frowning at this colossus, "give me that man. He acknowledges to being a rogue, is proud of it, gloats over his past career, defies the world. In Cockaigne he had his birth, no doubt in great St. Giles, to Vandemonia emigrated—free of all expense—carefully tended by the officers of a loving Sovereign; what there he did would harrow up your soul, but let that pass; behold him in the golden country of Victoria when first the yellow dross was found; behold him at each rush; here he has a sporting house where Bill the Bruiser, Jack the Giant, and others exhibit the noble art of self-defence; where drunken men are robbed with impunity, for does not the landlord say 'They don't appreciate the gilt, nor know how to preserve it; I do, therefore let it fill my purse;' then follow him to Melbourne city when the golden fever died away, and see him struggling with adversity, his gains departed with his friends, who seek the halcyon Callao; see him with the basket on his arm as he cries 'Trotters!' even then deceiving humble buyers of the tender feet; pretending to an honest call-

ing, when he looks out only for the men with fumes of wine, or rum, or brandy stupefied; behold him living on the wages earned by some poor creature he's betrayed, a bully, basest of mankind, a creature that the dogs should eat, whose bones should not be sepulchred; but now, see, he has made a rise; the Gippsland rush has filled the pockets of a man with empty head; he seeks the flaring gas of Melbourne streets, the flowing poison bowl, the gay converse of painted deaths; there's poison in the cup, the strong man falls like Satan prone, then see this Megatherium stand o'er him like Colossus, lo! see the fat purse in his hand, ha! ha! £2000 in notes are there; good-bye to trotters, and to Poll: the betting ring for me; I know a boy, a little boy, who is to ride the favorite for the Cup, hurra! a happy thought, 'good boy behold this little paper, it contains a harmless powder, let it fall into the manger, then this Challenger shall fail to pass the post in time, and £500 shall then be thine; good little boy, hark unto me—he listens, he accepts, the thing is done, I take all bets on Challenger: the race is run, the favorite's last, and I am great Metallic Megatherium, worth £90,000!"

"Bravo, bravo," cried Robert, laughing; "your old 'fatal facility' for mock heroic has not deserted you Hugh; and such is the career of this man, who is worth £90,000."

"Yes, indeed," replied Hugh; "and the career of many another here. I could tell you many such a history, but I see Marian coming this way, so I desist."

What Hugh said further, Robert was oblivious of, for Marian was by his side, speaking to him in low sweet accents, fascinating him with her speaking eyes, her glorious beauty. In a few minutes they were moving in the dance. It is no exaggeration to say that they were the centre of attraction. The hard-faced dissipated men, the giddy women, could not but look upon the picture with envy. There was something so fresh, so attractive about Robert, something so becoming, yet not of this place or these people, that all of them would fain have but which would be theirs no more. His beauty, his grace, the charm of youth he cast around: these were beyond them. And Marian was radiant with a strange mystic beauty that appeared to become chastened by conjunction with the handsome boy by her side. It was a lovely but a fading picture!

"Very pretty young fellow," said the Megatherium, heaving alongside Hugh, who was absorbed in painful contemplation—remem-

brances of the past which he could not drive away—"friend of yours 'ope to make 'is acquaintance, let a hold friend 'ave a shy, eh? Lots o' the ready, no doubt."

"Yes," said Hugh, absently.

"A little out to-night," said the Megatherium, "'ave some Roederer, that's the stuff to put heart into you."

"No! brandy!" said Hugh, and the two adjourned, to speak, to converse, to understand.

The dance is over, and the two distinct parties in that room—the hawks and pigeons—are once more together. The hawks think the pigeons must pay for the entertainment; and the latter are proud to be initiated into the Eleusinian mysteries, and gladly lose their money.

But the spirit that presides over the place is at the piano. By her side is the youth she loves so well. And the room is filled with her rich contralto voice as she sings a song of her own, for Marian is a genius:—

"Hearts are beating, cheeks are glowing,  
Eyes around are glancing bright;  
And the chandeliers are throwing  
O'er the scene a luscious light;  
Far away are pain and sorrow,  
Memories of a vanished past,  
Far away thoughts of to-morrow,  
Love his spell around has cast."

As if in chorus came from the next room the sound of voices singing:

"When fortune frowns and friends forsake,  
And faith and love are dead;  
When man has nothing left to stake,  
To hope nor yet to dread;  
One godlike pleasure doth remain,  
The glorious vintage of champagne."

Such scenes have great attraction for the young and susceptible, especially such as have lived a quiet life. It seems a realisation of their dreams.

"I don't see the fun of all this," said Detective Meddle to Hugh, whom he found drinking in the refreshment-room. "It's nearly twelve o'clock, and there's been nothing done but trotting round the room dancing, or humbugging at the piano; not a card has been played."

"That won't do," observed the Megatherium with a string of curses. Amongst his many accomplishments the M. included the science of blasphemy, and even Sterne's commination would have failed to have given him sufficient vent. He had at his tongue's end the whole vocabulary of oaths, and was not chary in using it.

Loo, hazard, poker, vingt-un were soon in full swing, while the bookmakers, up to business, were recording bets on the forthcoming events. The young men in the

crowd were not slow in patronising them; it is such a passion of mankind to patronise.

Early that morning Robert rose from the tables loser of the £200 he had won, indebted to Hugh for another £100, and to several others for larger amounts. His brain was in a whirl, his ideas confused, his heart beating with a thousand different feelings. He had drowned his anxiety to a purpose!

How fresh was the air blowing across the Bay; how beautifully the calm moon shone on the shrubs and trees, emblems of peace and purity; how different her light to the glare of gas through the windows? This recalled Robert to himself. He would leave this and go home, home to Linda, to peace, to rest, to dream; he would fly to Harry, his heart's friend, confide his cares in him, and he, dear, dear Harry, would smooth the whole difficulty. Hark, what was that?

The rich, full notes of Marian's voice singing:

"An angel form in dreams beheld,  
Still charms my fancy's wakeful eyes,  
And morning's light has not dispelled  
The radiance of its lovely guise;  
Still hovering near on buoyant wings  
It bends on me its beauteous gaze,  
And in mine ear its sweet voice rings  
This wildest of loveworld lays:  
'Beloved by thee, myself to know,  
I'd welcome give eternal woe:'"

That magic voice!

There was a rustling near him. He knew it was Marian; her hand touched his, her breath was on his face, her dark eyes met his. They were alone in the moonlight.

"I am going home," said he quietly.

"Home!" and the beautiful form crept closer, the fascinating face came nearer to his, the white arms were clasped around him.

Home!

## PART VII.

### "THYSELF DECEIVING."

From eight to ten in the morning there is an intermittent stream of people passing out of the Hobson's Bay Railway Station, and walking up Elizabeth and Swanston-streets to their daily avocations. Generally all look brisk and happy, their button-holes filled with a fresh flower, their faces wearing the sedate appearance a comfortable meal always imparts to an English frontispiece; the whole crowned with that look of cheerful interest which shows men have something to do, and intend to do it. A cynic would, of course, find room for observations of a different kind: he would note the keen faces cal-

culating how much they would cheat others that day, what wonderful profit they would make, what fresh deeds of evil they would commit. There were faces, however, which would have given rise to another kind of contemplation, and Robert Wilton's was amongst these. As he walked up Elizabeth-street the morning after the St. Kilda party, it was not difficult to see that his mind was troubled. His eyes flashed with a wild, unsteady light, his face was pallid, and his whole aspect unmistakably dissipated. A terrible headache racked his brain to agony — a headache that knew no mitigation, but throbbed away remorselessly. As he stepped in amongst the crowd he was upon the very verge of madness. Bodily he suffered, but mentally the torture was fearful. He knew that he had done wrong, and was suffering the consequences; he knew that if he did not act quickly he would be an inmate of the Melbourne gaol before many days. The intense anguish arising as the consequence of acting against our own convictions was Robert's. Linda's face rose reproachfully before him, and he pictured the poor girl pining away in solitude while he was revelling. Where now was all that phantasmagoria of joy, and light, and beauty, and song, and wine, and dance, that had so effectually drowned his cares? The morning's light had dissipated the unhallowed charm as in superstition it is said the dawn chases away all that is unholy and unclean. In plain prose it is a fact that daylight is a marvellous disenchanter. Now Robert could plainly see, although too late, that he had been duped, although he could not understand why, for it did not seem consonant with the character of these people to seek the company of one who was penniless. He could hardly explain the exuberance of the friendship of Metallic Megatherium, who lent him money almost against his wish; he could not understand the pretty general deference paid to him. Here nature could not but adroitly whisper that he had his good looks to thank; he had always been loved by everyone, and the "talent" were no exception. Would it be possible to arouse friendship in the souls of men so powerful as Megatherium? The man could not be wholly evil and worldly. Hugh had confessed that he had given him great help, and but for his aid even now he would be embarrassed. Indeed Robert saw plainly that Hugh was not so wealthy as he appeared, and that any appeal to him for the fatal £300 would be vain. And Marian? No,



never; his soul revolted from that; he would not lower himself to that degree at all events. Harry? Here tender thoughts again entered his soul, and the friend of his youth once more resumed his power, only to be dashed down, by the pride of Robert's soul. How could he submit to Harry's probing questions, to his advice? Yet in his heart he knew perfectly well all this would proceed from the true and perfect love Harry bore him. O! God, when would this fearful struggle end, how would he escape from the Mount Sinai of doom that frowned above, threatening to fall and crush him to atoms? He could almost cry aloud in the torture of his soul, and there, in his company, were men and women, all going to their business contentedly, laughing and chatting, oblivious that there were such things as pain and sorrow in this world. To the troubled mind there is no one suffering but itself. Robert almost felt furious at the calm demeanor of those who thronged the street around him.

But here was the bank. Like a prisoner entering the dock he slunk into the place which had so often been regarded by him with pride, but was now looked on with fear, and, he reflected, not from fault of his own, but through some diabolical mistake. Would it not be better to confess the whole thing? Pshaw! What folly! Who would believe a word he said? Who would listen to him? Not cold, unmerciful Calculus, nor mild, but immovable Overdraw. Some other remedy must be sought.

How Robert got through that day's business he never could understand. That headache still continued, at times becoming so violent that he could hardly see the notes as he counted them out, and he had to grasp the counter at times to restrain himself. But there was another cause of anguish. Harry noted that an extraordinary activity appeared to prevail amongst the head officials all day. There was much hurrying and bustle, much consulting of ledgers, and examination of clerks. At times he thought there was a strange meaning in the snaky, sneering eyes of Calculus as they met his, and a pitying gleam in those of Overdraw. Still he continued his work with a dreadful energy, counting and calculating as if life itself depended on his exertions. The customers wondered at the pale but wonderfully fascinating face of the cashier, and Robert heard two motherly ladies who had come in to cash a cheque discussing about him with each other. "What a splendid face," said one. "Very beautiful, very interesting," said

the other, bending her kind eyes on Robert, "but it pains me to look at the poor boy, he seems as if suffering deeply." "We must all suffer," said the other lady, and they moved out. Robert felt almost furious when the custom slackened; he was in a fever, and wanted to be kept busy. When the bank hours were over, and the customers' hall was deserted, the reaction came, and he felt delicious. A fever was raging in his veins; and he could not run across the street to get something to steady his nerves. He felt as if he could die.

And now as he finished his tasks there came back to him the remembrance of the day when Hugh stood in that hall and spoke those dreadful words: "And when that comes to pass may the same be meted out to you which you have meted out to me."

Was it possible that he would become what Hugh had been, would fall from his position, be an outcast, a felon? Impossible! Yet the words rang in his ears like the blast of the trumpet of doom.

"Mr. Wilton!"

It was the messenger who spoke. The blood rushed into Robert's face, the pulsations of his heart became violent, and could be distinctly heard; he thought he would have fallen. In vain he tried to look bold, to stand steady, the shock was too much.

"The manager wants to speak to you, sir," continued the messenger.

With tottering steps Robert walked into that room, which was such a terror to every soul in the establishment. And do we wonder at the dread that terrible room inspired? There the fate of many a man had been decided; there the youthful clerk had heard the stern words which placed him out of the bounds of the respectable; there the tottering man of business had listened to the fiat that destroyed his credit, broke down the labor of a whole life, and threw him upon the world a poorer man than when he began life many years before, utterly crushed and unable to raise his head again. In that neatly furnished apartment, where Mr. Overdraw had sat in state for many a day, dispensing death and life, many and many a bitter tragedy had been enacted; many a life drama played; still that mild old man sat there as if oblivious of the tide of human joy and sorrow that passed by him; oblivious of everything, except the stern fact that the shareholders must have dividends or his occupation would be gone. There he sat like Fate, the smile on his face for those who came to profit the bank, the inflexible

frown on it to those who asked for favors that might injure the bank, and through the bank him. Grey of head, furrowed of face, Mr. Overdraw was what you would have called if you met him in society, a genial kindly old gentleman. But in that room he became a changed man, solely the creature of business. Selfishness pervaded his whole being then, and no consideration of friendship, no appeal of misery, could touch his soul. He was the steel mirror reflecting the passions of mankind, himself cold and passionless. Yet out of that bank he could love like others, and he had always shown an affection for his young cashier. Such was the man before whom Robert Wilton stood like the criminal in the presence of his judge.

"Take a seat, Robert," said the manager, in so kind a tone that the whole army of suspicions and fears which hung over the youth's soul fled, as the shadows at the dawn of day. With a deep sigh of intense relief, the boy sat down. He could have burst into tears of joy. Not yet, not yet; there was still time! The bridge had not snapped; the gates of the City of Refuge were still open.

"We have been thinking that the time has come to raise your salary, Mr. Wilton," said the manager, "and in the course of a few days you will receive the official letter acquainting you with the change. I can only say that I feel pleasure in announcing to you the fact, and that I am sure it will be well merited."

"I feel deeply indebted to you, sir," replied Robert, "and to the Board, and hope to give increased satisfaction as they have increased salary."

"No doubt, no doubt," said the manager, with a pleased smile; "We have never had to complain of you, my dear boy. Were our offices filled by such men as Harry Robertson and yourself, there would be little responsibility and anxiety connected with my duties. I have been grievously disappointed with many men, Robert, but I do not think I shall be with you. My dear boy," continued the old gentleman, dropping the formal tone he had assumed, "let me advise you as a father would his son, for you have no parent. Learn from an older man than yourself that patience is of all virtues the greatest, and when you see other men make sudden fortunes, learn to control yourself and be patient. Time, industry, and perseverance are the stones which build the edifice of fortune. You may go on slowly for years, and seem to make no progress, but work, and save, and learn to wait, and the time will come,

when fortune's tide will roll your way. Then the change will be so rapid that you will hardly be able to note the manner in which riches will flow in. But above all things, keep from the hotel bar, the gambling room, the strange woman, and make this your place of business, your home of enjoyment. But I need not say this to you, Robert; I know you follow the rules I have laid down, and that you have the friendship of a man who is their embodiment. One thing, however, I would warn you about; nature has gifted you with a beautiful person and a winning way, and that may lead you into danger, for there will be many who will pretend to love you when it is only your looks they esteem."

Poor Robert! His very soul was wrung while this man, usually so reserved, spoke so friendly to him, and manifested such concern in his welfare. Once or twice he nearly burst into tears, and revealed everything. But the utter impossibility of anyone crediting his assertions stayed his tongue.

"You don't look well to-day," said Mr. Overdraw, very kindly; "you have been working too hard. Hasten home and your little wife will soon restore you."

Robert walked out of the room in a dazed helpless way. The headache had at last ceased, leaving the brain almost numb. It seemed to him as if he were now perfectly reckless. That is a necessary sequence to all excess. Intemperance of any kind would not of itself be so great a curse were it not for the utter relaxation of the body that follows, which results in a craving for more excitement, and flying for relief to the very cause. Then the dreadful thought of discovery came again to him with twofold power. But what grated on his mind above all was the conduct of his fellow clerks, who, as usual, when work was over, larked and chaffed and knocked about, while he was afraid to appear dull, lest they would suspect something was wrong. When they came out into the street the gay crowd which does the Block of an afternoon was promenading up and down, talking, flirting, and scandalmongering. On every side Robert was met with bows and smiles.

"Coming down to have a row?" asked young Oary, slapping Robert on the thigh; "good thing on to-day, Buntline's crew take a breather, and they're in grand fig."

"Come with me, Bobs," asked another youth; "you haven't been up to the cricket ground these three months, and there's a good match on to-day. The Melbourne play

Muddy Gully, and the new round arm bowler is to put in an appearance."

"Won't you come with me, Bobs?" pleaded a handsome, dark-eyed youth, who worshipped Robert, and had been awfully annoyed at his marriage, as he was deprived of his company.

"I can't, really, Freddy," replied Robert, his voice betraying a kind of regret; "I can't, old fellow; I have business to do."

"Business," said Fred, gloomily; "it's all through getting married; once you would go with me any where, now you never give me your company for five minutes."

How could Robert go with that bright-faced boy, intent only on life, and frolic, and fun. Ah, me! those days had gone for him for ever.

Robert walked hastily away, amidst a chorus of remarks about the change marriage makes. It exasperated him to meet so many as he went along Collins-street, and, disgusted, he turned into Elizabeth-street, which, being less fashionable, presented less chance of meeting with his friends. He felt that he could do no longer without a stimulant. Entering a small public-house, he drank off a glass of brandy, which infused new life into him, and made him feel another man. He had finished when there crawled up to his side a loathsome object wearing the shape of man, but a brute in face.

"How do you do, Bobs?" said the horror, in a husky broken voice.

Robert look steadily at the man. It was—it was not—yes, it was—his once fellow clerk, Slabang, who, when Robert entered the bank, had been his admiration. Gay, jovial, clever, Will Slabang was courted by all. Then gradually he had changed; his fascinating smile vanished, his face became white and pinched, his brow corrugated and he often came into the office intoxicated, and one day, one memorable day, as Slabang was at his desk in a helpless state, in came Detective Meddle and his satellites and bore him away to gaol, to be tried and found guilty of forgery.

With a terrible sinking of the heart, Robert gazed upon this awful evidence of the result of falling away.

"Are you not going to shout for an old friend?" asked Slabang, in that indescribable tone that speaks of the utter loss of shame.

"Give him what he wants," faltered Robert.

"Brandy," cried Slabang, and he dashed

off the glass as if he were drinking the elixir of life. Then turning to Robert he said, somewhat contemptuously: "Ah; so you look fine, Bobs. I did once, but now—well, it does not matter. How is Hugh?"

"Oh, well enough," said Robert, anxious to get away.

"Better than he will be," said Slabang, with a scowl. "Look here, I've seen that man proud as Lucifer, and then I've seen him, been his companion, when he was the lowest of the low; now he drives his trap and puts on airs, but, Robert, you'll see him in gaol yet: in the dock. And I'll be there, I'll be there to gloat over him. I might help to put him there—who knows. He dare not look me in the face, poor and degraded as I am; speak my name in his ear and he will start. Ask him for Bell! O! Robert how glorious you look, so young, so handsome, so happy!"

Happy! Robert shuddered.

"And may you be happy," continued Slabang; "may you long remain the handsome boy you are. Have you got any money?"

Robert took out a half-sovereign, handed it to him, and ran away, fear adding to his pace. To escape from such a fate as this, anything would be preferable. He would find Hugh at the sporting Verandah, and he would beg the £300 of him. Surely he could not refuse.

In the city of Melbourne, in great Bourke-street, there fronts the Theatre Royal a spot of ground that has seen many mutations. Once it was a livery stable; then it was built over and turned into a place of amusement called the Varieties, a most appropriate name, for varieties of vanities were there to be found, but virtue was absent. Gay women and "flash" men had there their rendezvous. When the place had reached its acme, it was lustrated by a fire, not before the time had come. For a while, the ruins of this Paphian temple loomed upon the crowds of Bourke-street, but Vesta having paid a visit to the Theatre Royal, an enterprising man at once began to build a rival theatre on this site, and like many other theatrical speculators found his toy exceedingly expensive. Then it was turned into an opera house, and thus remains. But

"You may break you may ruin the vase if you will, But the perfume of roses will hang round it still."

So there congregates around the chosen spot, the sporting man, the gambler, the horse jockey, Anonymas, gay of garb, and all the following of vice, and there at all hours you can find men who will be ready to bet with

you, gamble with you, fight with you, drink with you, provided you have the money. There is a strong Israelitish flavor about this Verandah; the noses are large and hooked, and the coats glossy and velveteen. The language is not exceedingly fit for the drawing-room; the faces are not those of gentlemen, although huge gold cables are the rule and fingers sparkle and shirt fronts blossom with diamonds. The press abominates that Verandah, because not a few of the profession have been severely taken in there; they revile the *habitués*, and use them spitefully in print; the pulpit preaches or fulminates against them, but they go on their way taking the money of the public, and laughing at the abuse. For there is much philosophy under that Verandah. The men who haunt it have rubbed shoulders pretty hard with the world and understand its ways, though they may not know how to speak elegantly or write clever leaders. They know how to live. They know that they have that great passion of humanity, cupidity, to work upon, and they don't fail to be industrious in that avocation. Indeed, they are a reproach to other men who, if they worked as hard and earnestly in their different spheres as the despised betting men, would have equal success. By day you will find them there standing around waiting for the pigeon to flutter into the net; at night they haunt the precincts of the temple anxious to meet the devotees of chance, and either "do" them on the spot or take them to some place, where, by means of hazard, loo, poker, or other games, they can satisfactorily settle them. But these men are honorable, strictly honorable, just as the great merchants who cheat one another in Collins-street. They pay their debts promptly, because they know that if they do not their occupation is gone—all men are honest on compulsion. They don't cheat one another—when there are no pigeons around. Under that Verandah, and in the rooms of the hotel, the great races of Australia are determined, and the winning horses settled upon at the last moment. There in the bright gaslight, fools are picked up, men are robbed of their senses, and intoxicated with all that makes silly fellows think they are living fast; but then I suppose the members of society will haunt that or some other spot where false pleasure is to be found, as long as poor human nature remains as it is. Experience teaches fools it is said, but then most like to have the experience in order that they may find out whether they are fools or not.

Robert was not disappointed. Hugh was standing outside the Prince of Wales Hotel, talking with a number of the very tip top of the "profession." The three Israelites, mentioned previously, were there, arrayed in glory greater than that of Solomon. Metallic Megatherium was booking bets, and swearing oaths as fast as he could, and around him stood the small fry, looking on with envy, while at the doors of the different tobacconists' shops (ostensibly so) stood little groups, intently watching the turf magnates, in hopes, perhaps, of catching the tip for the next Cup. It was a select gathering.

Robert was quite surprised at the manner in which he was received. Had he been Metallic Megatherium himself he could not have expected greater homage. An adjournment at once took place for a drink, and Robert was favored with numberless innuendoes, which will not bear repetition. No man ever could accuse the three Israelites or Metallic Megatherium of not being plainspoken. But Robert was too ill at ease to enjoy this, although he felt flattered, and he took the earliest opportunity to get Hugh by himself, much to the disappointment of the other crew.

"That Hanlon's a deep card," said Megatherium to himself, "a deep card, and plays his hand well. I see he wants to go a lone hand with that boy, but he don't, not if I knows it. I'll have a slap there, or I'll know the reason why."

"The fact is, Hugh," said Robert, hesitatingly, and with the hot blood suffusing his face, for he had never asked a favor of the kind before, "the fact is, I want to borrow £300. It will only be for a short time. I could get it off Harry at once, but I have quarrelled with him, and made up my mind not to speak to him for a while."

"You are right," said Hugh, with a strange smile. "Robert, do not be offended if I hint that Harry is too often in company with your wife."

"If I thought that," said Robert, making a movement—

"You must not trust people too much, even men like Harry," said Hugh; "human nature is weak, and you know he was passionately fond of Linda, and she esteemed him very much."

"Don't speak of it, Hugh," said Robert, gloomily. "It seems to me all my troubles are coming at one time. But I am sure you will help me out of this difficulty. And I want the money to-day—in an hour."

The blood again rushed to his face, his



heart beat fast, his tongue felt dry and parched, for he felt certain Hugh suspected why he wanted the money.

"Yes, yes, no doubt," said Hugh, "but I cannot do it myself."

Robert fell back in despair. Even at that moment Overdraw might be counting his cash. The thought was agony.

"But I can get some one who will lend you the money, Marian would —"

"No, no," said Robert.

"Well," said Hugh, smiling grimly, "I must introduce you to my old friend the money-lender, Mahaleel Methuselah, the *amicus curiae* of all the fast men in town, who for sixty per cent. is ready to give you anything but his daughter, for like Shylock he has a daughter, and a pretty one."

"But I have no security," said Robert.

"Oh that will be all right," said Hugh, "Come along."

Mr Mahaleel Methuselah was in the very height of business. As Robert and Hugh entered his establishment, a veiled lady, dressed in the height of fashion, passed out, and in the hall they met a fast young man, who had evidently been doing a bill. Mr Mahaleel Methuselah sat behind a little desk peering over some papers. He was a little man with a nose that absolutely met his chin, an old withered rheumy hunk, whose very fingers conveyed the idea of grasping. Mahaleel was a wonderful man, a relic of the old times. Ten years ago this man, who now owned vast properties, who could lay his hand on more than £100,000 in cash, was a common pedlar, wandering about the country selling his wares. Most of the Jews begin their career in that way; it is a sort of apprenticeship to the work of understanding mankind, so essentially their business. Mr. Mahaleel Methuselah had travelled amongst the diggings, bought gold dust at sacrificial prices, and sold goods at a thousand per cent., so that in time he amassed a little fortune, which he invested in a pawnbroking business in the city, and the seed sown bore such good fruit that in time he was able to give up the less aristocratic part of the business and set up as a money-lender, and no man was more suited for the work. By making his customers pay by instalments, he escaped the chance of great losses, and at the same time as the returned money was going out at interest, it was impossible to calculate what interest he obtained.

"Vell, vell," said he, as our young men

entered, "Vell, vell, Mr Hanlon, how are you, it's long since I have seen you. Quite vell? You rich people get too proud to visit poor folks like me."

"O! that'll do, Methuselah," said Hugh, "I've brought you a customer, and you ought to be glad I return good for evil, for when I wanted money badly you wouldn't discount my bill."

"I hadn't a shent," said the old man, gripping his desk.

"O! I understand all that," said Hugh, "but to business. My friend here wants £500."

The Jew gave a look of horror. His hands seemed to close firmer, and his nose approached nearer to his chin; and yet there seemed to be a very perfect understanding between Hugh and himself.

"I haven't £500 in the world," said Mahaleel Methuselah convulsively, "but what is the security?"

"His own," replied Hugh haughtily. "I think you know Mr. Wilton. He is in a high position in the Collusive Bank."

"Yes, yes, I know," said Methuselah; "he is a very respectable young man. Vell, as you asks for it, Mr. Hanlon, I'll try and do it; but I have been shamefully deceived, gentlemen, and I must be cautious. Look at this," said he, placing before them a cheque.

Roberts' heart beat with wild excitement; he could have the money; he would be free; the strained mind could relax. Oh! happiness, happiness. How kind, how very good, was Hugh!

Kind and good!

"Well, what about that cheque?" asked Hugh.

"Vell, look," said the Jew; "fair and square, ain't it? One hundred pounds! Gentlemen, I gave four hundred pounds for that bit of paper."

"How?" exclaimed both at once.

"Ven I cashed it, vy it was £400 as plain as the nose on a man's face—and mine's plain enough"—Methuselah was a wag in his way—"but ven I took it out to cash next day it was £100. You see the 1 is written so that you can make 1 or 4 of it, and the rascal added 'F' in some ink or stuff that fades away in a day or so, and a tail to the 1 in the same ink."

A light seemed to dawn on Robert's mind; a light, a fatal light, a beam from the realms of perdition.

But the present emergency was to be met, and Robert hastened on negotiations, anxious  
D



to return to the bank. The upshot of the matter was that, after signing various papers, he received £450, the remainder being deducted for interest, and the money to be paid by instalments of £50 per month. The present relief was so great that Robert never thought how the instalments were to be paid.

Can we describe the joy that filled his soul when £450 was placed in his hand? It was a reprieve, a resurrection into life. He seemed to breathe another air, to live another life, to be another man. Hastily bidding the money-lender adieu — a gentle wink passed between that worthy and Hugh—he sped on to Collins-street, leaving Hugh in Bourke-street to join the Megatherium. The bank doors were still open, as some of the clerks were posting-up. Robert entered as if to do some work. To his horror, Mr. Overdraw and Mr. Calculus were counting his cash. For a moment he stood spellbound; then calling to mind that everything depended on his courage, he went forward, clutching £300 in his hand.

"Ah, Robert," said Overdraw; "have you returned to do some work. We were just going through your cash."

Again the cloud was lifted. They had not found out the deficiency.

"I had forgotten something," said Robert.

He could think of no means of saving himself, except by dropping the £300 roll of notes on the floor. He did so, and went to his desk and began going over a book. Suddenly the cold, grating voice of Calculus sounded.

"There's £300 short here," he said.

"We must have made a mistake," said Mr. Overdraw, in an agitated manner; "let us go through the money again."

"I am sure all the money is there," said Robert, calmly. He could never understand how he managed to keep so cool.

Overdraw was so flurried, that in running over the rolls of notes, he dropped one on the floor. No sooner had he stooped to pick it up than the notes Robert had dropped met his eye.

"Why, we have been alarming ourselves needlessly," said he, joyfully; "here are the notes, dropped, I suppose, by me."

Robert looked round as if surprised, and again met the cold, glittering eye of Calculus. There was something dreadful in his face.

After Robert had done enough to justify his return to the bank, he bade the old gentlemen farewell, so deliriously happy

that he felt as if he could dance in the street, and shout, and halloo, and sing.

Poor fool!

He had averted the danger for a day.

## PART VIII.

"HE COMETH NOT, SHE SAID."

The sun rose in glory in the eastern sky, dissipating the shadows of night, waking the world into life and activity, brightening the face of nature, warming the earth and dispelling the mists and the shadows, and making everything clear. Man arose to pursue his daily tasks, the hum of the great city filled the air, ships sailed to and fro on the azure Bay, life was once more begun. But in that great city there was many a wearied soul that had watched the dawn irradiating nature, the sun growing into morning strength, and yet knew no comfort, felt none of the cheerful spirit infused into nature by the glorious luminary, who could say, "The day cometh, and I rejoice not; the night falls, and yet there is no peace." And of these was Linda Wilton.

She had sat in the little drawing-room, and watched the paling of the stars, the cold grey of the dawn, the burst of roseate light preceding the rising of the orb of day, with a sort of dulled consciousness of what was transpiring, but her great sorrow still brooded on her soul, and shut out all that was bright and beautiful, all but the fearful reflection that the boy she loved so passionately had deserted her, and that she knew not to what her folly would lead. Every moment she expected to hear the front gate turn on its hinges, the door to open, and dear Bobs' handsome face and form appear in that room, but hour after hour passed, night grew into day, and he came not, so that, as nature grew brighter, the shadow fell heavier on her soul. "He cometh not, he cometh not, she said." The morning sunbeams as they streamed into the room, found a pale and haggard woman, very unlike the beautiful creature usually to be seen tripping through that house, preparing breakfast for the dear one, who would be slumbering until the last moment, knowing there was one who would see to his comfort in every way, and prevent his being late for the train. Poor Linda, there was no one to look after that day, no one except herself, and to her that second self was a thousandfold more important. She could hardly recognise that he was not there.

Where had he gone? What had he been doing during the solemn watches of that

night, while she sat in that lonely room, confronted by the ghost of her vanished happiness? He knew she was waiting for him; he knew her heart was breaking to be reconciled; that until his arms were around her, his lips to hers, his breast to her breast, she would suffer unspeakably. He knew this, and why did he not come. But now a comforting thought entered her mind. Once or twice he had stopped during the night with Harry; perhaps after the tiff the previous evening he had gone to St. Kilda to make matters up with his friend, and, as it was late, remained there all night? But if it were so, the maddening thought came, that Harry would have put the horses to his carriage and driven Robert home that a reconciliation might be effected. But, again, perhaps he had resolved to humble her and had gone to spend the night with some friends. Then came like a deluge upon her soul the many things she had heard about the dissipation into which some young married men plunged, when thwarted or tired of the monotony of their life. She had repeatedly heard stories of wild recklessness, and they came back to her with terrible effect. Her soul, the soul of jealous woman, was filled with a series of distracting thoughts that well nigh drove her frantic. Woman is weak, and there is nothing that touches her deeper than the infidelity of the man she loves. Pure as was Linda's mind she could not escape a terrible paroxysm of jealousy as the idea entered her mind that Robert might have been revelling in scenes of gaiety, might have lavished the caresses of love on other than herself. It was the agony of perdition to think of such a probability. Her own Bobs another's, in the arms of a rival, and such a rival! Her greatest pride had been that his reputation had been so pure, and that she had married a man blameless as herself. And now, if these terrible fears were true!

Could she have witnessed the scenes through which her darling passed that night, what would she have said, what would she have done!

O! that she could know the full extent of what she would have to bear. But no one came, not a voice broke on her miserable solitude. This harassing anxiety, this restless fear that could not be quieted!

Mrs Moran came in and asked her if she would breakfast, but Linda impatiently told her to fetch a cup of coffee and begone. Never had the old lady seen her mistress in such a state of mind.

"Sure the master's a naughty man," said

Mrs. Moran to herself as she retreated, "to murder the mistress in that way—it's killing her. But I don't know why she takes on so, shure many's the night Moran was away from me, whin he was alive, and glad I was of it."

The coffee somewhat revived Linda, and she walked out into the garden to inhale the fresh air. Here again the absence of Robert touched her to the heart. Every morning they were in the habit of doing a little gardening together—more flirting than work. There was not a plant in that garden but had a history connected with Bobs. He had planted that fuschia, had trimmed that pear, had tied up these carnations, had grafted that rose tree. Wherever she turned he was present—but not himself, not himself. The darling, why was he absent? Over a blushing camellia, the tears of his poor little wife slowly fell, as she wept for the absence of the man she loved so wildly.

A sharp whinney, a deep low, sounded on the air, and at her feet Snix and Scrix were quarrelling as to who should have precedence. Again she was reminded of a loss. Valentine and Lucy had missed the poor boy who tended them with such care, and were calling for him in the only way they could. Poor Billy! He had worked his way into Linda's heart; indeed, his gentle manner, his patience, his efforts to improve himself, and become equal to the bounty of those who had rescued him from degradation, could not but win any heart to him, particularly one so susceptible to all the better emotions of our nature as Linda's. How glad she felt that he had been taken in hand by Harry, who she knew, would take care of him as if he was his own brother. And are we not all brothers? So Christ has taught, but the people who call themselves Christians now don't recognise the beautiful doctrines of their founder, save and except so far as they agree with their own views.

And so the weary day passed. In vain Linda tried needlework, music, reading; her brain refused to apply itself to anything. At one time, indeed, she thought, of going to the city to see if Robert was at the bank. Here again, however, her pride stood in the way, for she could not bear the idea of following him about as if to seek for reconciliation. Surely he would return that evening, and then would come the sweet union for which she would now peril her soul.

The sun at last set in the west, and the shadows of evening began to fall over wearied nature. Train after train had stopped

at the station, and discharged its passengers, each to wend their way home, but she did not see her Robert coming across the streets. Watching for his coming, nature at last succumbed, and, reclining in an arm-chair on the verandah, she fell into a dream-troubled sleep, the stars shining upon her pale beauty, the dying flush of day irradiating her lovely face.

Were those phantoms of a dream that arose by her side, close to the lattice? As far as revealed by the dim light, one was an old-faced ragged boy, the other a horrid creature, seeming to be a man, yet rather of the brute species. They stood in the shadows, and whispered.

"That's his wife," said the boy. "She's asleep. There's lots of tin in the house; lots of things we could nab."

"But she'll wake, and the traps will nab us," said the other, in thick accents, cowering under the verandah.

"Nonsense," said the boy; "if you keep watch, I'll steal in, and bring out something that'll give us plenty of beer for the next three months."

"Well, well, I'll watch," said the man, staggering against a shrub, "but don't be too long; I'm not able to run as well as I was once."

Cautiously Patsy Quinlan, for it was he, crept out into the open space, and was about to step on the verandah, when the sound of wheels was heard, a flash of light filled space, and Patsy had hardly time to crouch behind the shrub along with his companion, who now shook like an aspen, when a hansom drew up at the gate, and two gentlemen alighted, and walked up the path. One was a young, elastic fellow, whose very movements spoke of grace and beauty; the other was a heavier and less elegant man.

"That's Robert Wilton," said Patsy, in a low tone; "the other's—"

"Don't tell me who the other is," said Slabang, "I know him. I know Satan, and that is enough. Patsy, what do you say to getting £500? It would be better than the few shillings you would raise on a paltry workbox."

Linda awoke when the steps sounded on the verandah, out of a dream of the past, a dream wherein her splendid Robert was again courting her in the old garden where her life budded into blossom, and the pleasure of love filled her soul. She awoke to find him by her side.

"Sleeping, Linda," he said, in a cold, un-

impassioned voice, that jarred upon her ear. Oh, what would she have given to have sprung up, and clasping the dear boy to her breast, wept her sorrows away. But for him to come home thus, to speak so coldly, to offer no excuse, not to even notice the sorrow she must have suffered—it was agony unspeakable.

Now she noticed the stranger standing beside him—a tall, handsome man, whose lineaments in the darkness were, to her mind, almost Satanic. It was the man she had known in the old times, Hugh Hanlon; the man who had fallen at her feet and worshipped her as an African does his fetish, who for her sake had lost honor, wealth, position, and gone down to the depth of infamy, to rise she knew not how. There he stood by Robert's side, like a Nemesis who had come there to witness the punishment she suffered for inflicting such misery on one who loved her. She shuddered as she gazed.

Robert had felt himself unequal to the task of facing Linda alone; and therefore he had taken Hugh home with him that there might be a third party present. How Hugh's heart beat with joy at this prospect of being introduced to the paradise which he had so long desired to enter that he might destroy the happiness of those within.

A year ago an outcast, wandering without a home, except the wide dome of Heaven; now well-to-do, and a guest in this little palace! Here was a change indeed. And who had wrought it? Marian Lee. And he did not forget her; he thought how faithfully he was serving her in acting as he did, and himself at the same time.

Time brings its revenges. The day might come when the beautiful youth who stood by his side would be as miserable and degraded as he had been, and the lovely woman he so desired would be his, his by a bond stronger than united her to his rival.

"Is dinner ready, Linda," asked Robert.

Such a cool common-place observation! Linda did not faint, did not cry out, but the tears fell down her cheeks silently. Then a resolve came into her mind to bear it all, to appear as if nothing had occurred, and to try and win back whatever of his love she had lost. It would be glorious to conquer self; it would show him her love was very pure and strong, and very different to that of the other, if there was another—here again the terrible pangs of jealousy wrung the soul of the poor girl.

"Nearly ready, Robert," she said, in a

calm voice, quivering a little, however; "nearly ready. I'll go and hurry Mrs. Moran."

"I forgot to mention I had brought Mr. Hanlon home with me," said Robert. "Here he is once more amongst us, after a long absence."

"I am glad to see you, Mr. Hanlon," Linda said quietly, and held out her hand to him.

He took that little hand, and, as he touched it, the memories of the past rushed into his soul, his heart leaped in his bosom, the blood flowed tumultuously through his veins, and he was once more the ardent lover. Ah! that dear little hand; how often he had held it within his own, once thinking it would be his. The touch of those taper fingers communicated to him again that never dying fire of love that had once burned in his bosom, and had never been dead, but waited only to be quickened into life.

She released her hold, and ran away to the kitchen to bid Mrs. Moran get up the dinner, and light the rooms; then went to her bedroom, and strove like a good little wife to put on her best appearance, and to seem as if nothing had occurred, and very fairly did Linda succeed; when she entered the pretty little dining-room, where Robert and Hugh were chatting, and where the neatly covered tables sparkled with glass and plate, she looked quite a little enchantress, very, very beautiful, but very, very pale. Hugh's admiring eyes devoured her, but Robert was too sleepy and confused to pay much heed to her, although he wondered how easily she took his desertion the previous evening, not, however, without some idea that she would lecture him when they retired to rest. However, he felt secure as to that, for he knew he would go to sleep the moment he got into bed.

After dinner the conversation lagged, and Robert began to nod, and soon felt so sleepy that after a few attempts to keep awake he said he could not stay out of bed any longer, and bidding Hugh good night he walked off to his chamber, leaving poor Linda alone with the man he had greatest reason to fear. But Robert cared for nothing in the world that night. The great and terrible burden had been lifted off his soul, and he could think now of nothing but rest.

Alone with her he had loved, he still loved, once purely, but now with a passion soiled by the long indulgence in sensuality, Hugh's heart beat faster, a warmer glow came into his cheeks, and his eyes sparkled

with a brighter light. Nature has ordained that in this world every sin should be its own punishment, and in his case his passions were now appointed to scourge him.

As for Linda, she felt the presence of Hugh hateful beyond expression. She wanted to retire to the side of her own darling that on his breast she might weep away her sorrow, confess her faults, and obtain forgiveness and reconciliation. But here was this man staying, forcing her to keep up a conversation she loathed. And when he came to her side, and asked her in the tones she remembered so well, to play some familiar airs on the piano, his presence became unbearable, yet with an unwilling heart she acceded to his request. At first her task was fulfilled ungraciously, but as the charms of the music touched her, as each familiar melody awoke the echoes of the past within her soul, bringing with them the memories of other days, she began to play with more vigor and grace and soon had almost forgotten her troubles in the sweet music.

And he, that sensual, passion-ridden man, sat by her, gloating on all her matchless beauties, noticing how she had filled up and became rounded since he had seen her last, how she was even more beautiful than ever, devouring her form with the eyes of impure desire.

"It's him," said a low voice outside; "It's him sure enough."

"Hush," said Patsy; "they'll hear you. But why did you speak of £500, Slabang; there's more chance of your going to heaven than of having that sum."

"When I was in the bank," said Slabang, with tipsy gravity, "I used to add two to two and it made four. Now, Mr. Patsy, let's begin the sum. Once, this fellow, Mr. Hugh Hanlon, now a great sporting man, was my fellow clerk, and fell just as I did. Many a woman he had helped to her fall before he toppled down. And he helped one, Patsy," here the man appeared to grow sober, and there was a terrible earnestness in the tone of his voice, "and that one was the only creature I ever cared for—you don't understand such things. But I loved her, Patsy, very, very dearly, and I do believe would have made her my wife, when that wretch came between us, and Bell, my Bell, became a ruined creature."

Tears, no doubt the effect of beer and grief, rolled down Slabang's cheeks in the darkness.



"All my sisters went that way," said Patsy, with doleful gravity.

"Patsy," said Slabang, grasping his companion, "when I was wandering about the streets, a miserable wretch, I saw that man driving my pet, dressed up in the tinsel of shame. Then he fell, as I had fallen, and in time we joined—yes, and Bell too. O! she was a dear good little thing, whose heart nothing could destroy. God bless her memory! But you don't understand me—" here his voice appeared to choke, for he was speaking in a different style to that he usually adopted, and knew Patsy did not comprehend him, or sympathise with his feelings. "Well, I missed them, and then I missed Bell. Then reading the placards, as usual, I read one offering £500 reward for the murderer of a woman who was found dead in the swamp. I thought her description answered Bell's, and went to see the corpse; it was her body, but, how altered—I can't stand this—have you money for a couple of pints?"

"By and bye, Slabang," said Patsy. "But who do you think killed her? A pal o' mine, Billy Dawson, spoke about it to me."

"He did," said Slabang. "I didn't see it, but I feel it was this man. If we could only work it up, we'd have the £500. And I'll do it—"

"If you don't get too much beer," said Patsy, with a quiet sneer. "Well, I have an odd tanner, so we'll have a couple of pints, for it's no use watching here; they'll stop there till doomsday. I know another place we can crack."

And stealthily the two stole away in the gloom, of which they were part.

At last Hugh was compelled to leave that fascinating company, but as he shook Linda's hand at the door an expression came to his face that would have frightened her—had she noticed and comprehended it, but she was oblivious of everything except Robert.

"I will succeed," said he, as threw himself back in the hansom, and pulled out a cigar, telling the driver to drive like the devil. "Success appears to meet me on every hand just as six months ago ill luck was omnipresent. It was too early to speak to her of Robert's laches, but I see already she is racked with jealousy. In all good time. Revenge and satisfaction will be mine; all that man can desire!"

Linda hastened the closing up of the house, and hurried on the wings of love to the bedside of dear Bobs. He was sleeping, his handsome face and curls alone visible, except

one of his hands which was gracefully posed by the side of his head. What intense and passionate love that girl felt for her husband as she stood by him. Her warm lips descended to his and imprinted an ardent kiss.

He moved uneasily, and muttered, "Marian—I—will—go—Marian."

She started back as if blasted. It was true then; he was unfaithful; another filled his dreams!

Poor Linda! With tears streaming from her eyes she knelt in that room, and prayed to God to give her strength to bear this terrible blow.

## PART IX.

### MELBOURNE MYSTERIES.

"In this dim world of clouding cares,  
We seldom know, till withered eyes  
See white wings lessening up the skies,  
The angel with us unawares."

Billy had not been long with Mr. Robertson before that gentleman discovered that there was stuff in the boy to make something more than a servant. The wonderful progress the lad had made in the short space of time he had been at Robert's, was nothing to the improvement in his manners and knowledge at Harry's, where he had greater scope. Harry's discriminating eyes found this out early, and soon the interest he felt in this lad, so anxious to rise from the state into which circumstances had forced him, became changed into warm admiration and affection. Remembering his own struggles in the days of his adversity, Harry felt his heart warm to this waif, who manifested so good a disposition. And the boy showed every aptitude to learn, and demonstrated the depth of his gratitude in a way that was pleasing without being fulsome. As Harry was without any relatives or intimate friends, and, indeed, felt lonely, with all his wealth, he often allowed Billy to sit at his table, in order to form his manners. What pleasure it gave Harry to see this bud unfolding, to help to train the vigorous shoot into a strong and beautiful tree. It was almost the feeling of a creator. He could not but reflect what a joy it would be to him in after years to see this youth grow into a successful man, and feel that he had been helped on the good path by him.

To give an idea of the changes that took place in the boy's mind would be almost impossible. It was with him as with a man who enters a theatre, and sees scene after scene unfold itself, disclosing beauties and appearances hitherto undreamt. Day by day his mind grew stronger, his grasp of



objects firmer; the mists and clouds that had overshadowed his intellect began to gather together, and flee away into the shadows, and glimpses of the blue sky of knowledge appeared. With eager steps, the boy trod the paths of progress, and found in Harry a generous helper, who felt as deeply interested as himself in his advance.

Living the happy life he did now, he could not, however, but remember that terrible past which appeared more dreadful from the relief in which it stood out when compared with his present existence. But there came back to the boy with tenfold force the recollection of the sweet faces which had been his only joy in the past; weird little Popsy dead and in her unknown grave in the great Melbourne cemetery, and the gentle, loving face of Bell, sister Bell, who had done so much to make his life bearable. Thoughts, too, of proud haughty Polly, with her grand ways and magnificent appearance, came into his mind, but he felt little interest in her. Little Popsy had gone to that Heaven where it is said little children ever meet with a welcome, but what had become of Bell? That was the only disturbing thought that entered Billy's mind in those halcyon days at St. Kilda. Week by week the feeling grew stronger, and he yearned to make the poor girl happy as himself. But could that be? Would it not be better to let the matter rest? How would it be if he were to find her as depraved as those females he had seen in the days of his misery amongst the outcasts? The thought was agony unutterable. But surely it was impossible. That sweet face could never become as these; those gentle eyes never could glower in the manner of their's. Yet how he feared; how sick he grew at heart as he thought of the possibility of such a thing.

After a time Billy broke his mind to Harry.

"It is very commendable in you to think of your poor sister," said Harry, "and to resolve to help her as she helped you in the past. You have my full consent to search for the girl, and to do all you can for her."

"But, sir," said the boy, agitatedly, "if, if—she has fallen."

"It matters not," said Harry. "Because a creature has fallen, is that any reason we should fold our hands and selfrighteously determine never to touch it again? If Jesus Christ could receive a repentant Magdalene, surely we, poor miserable sinful beings, can extend our hands to those who have sinned

as we, though perhaps more in the sight of the world. Mark that, Billy, the sight of the world, for now-a-days the enormity of a sin solely depends upon its publicity. Society says, 'Sin as much as you please in private, but in public be whited sepulchres and we will respect and adore you.' Yes, Billy, you have my consent to search for your sister, and if she has fallen, to do your best to raise her, as you yourself have been raised, to a better and a purer life."

The tears came to Billy's eyes as he wondered at the generosity of this noble man, who, so far above him, condescended to become his friend and instructor. And the hope arose in his soul that he would be able some day to repay him by the progress he would make.

Billy was not now afraid of Patsy, for he always carried sufficient money with him to "square" that sagacious little thief if they happened to meet, so he took the course of perambulating the streets in the hopes of meeting Bell. After a time, however, this proving unsuccessful, he thought he would once more make an essay to visit the little lane where all his misery had begun. As he walked up the lane, he could not but wonder in his own mind at the great change that had taken place. Here was he, who not many years ago had played 'there a squalid child, walking up the lane, in respect to clothes, at least a young gentleman. Not so very long ago he would, on seeing a youth dressed as he was now, have called out: "Hollo! look at the swell, boys." But now how utterly changed was he, not only outwardly, but within. The old lane was not changed. Still the same squalor and filth; the same broken down houses, with the old harpies sitting at their doors as of yore; the wretched children playing in the gutter as he and Popsy did in years gone by. But alas! there was no Popsy, no Bell there now, and Polly! She had gone, too, but he knew her fate was not of the best, although possibly bright as the world goes.

He was not surprised to find the old people gone; few of them were able to tenant their houses, or their bodies for any length of time. Only one person he recognised; Granny Truckler, who kept the greengrocery store; an old lady, whose nose and chin met, and who was reported to be very rich, although penurious to a degree. As a crowd of larrikins had gathered around him, and were crying out, "The swell, the swell, young Tommy Dodd," and so forth, he took refuge in the old woman's shop. It was

some time before the old crone recognised him, and when she did her surprise was unbounded. He gave her little information, however.

"Well, you have growed a fine boy," said Mrs. Truckler. "Know where your father and mother's gone—no, indeed, 'spects they're dead; couldn't last long at that rate. Have I ever seen Bell? Yes, I have wanst or twiste, but young man if you was a dutiful brother you wouldn't have let her go about as she did, and you a livin' in purple and fine linen."

Billy shivered. He had hoped against this, but now he saw there was no hope. No hope! Could he not act as a saviour, and raise his fallen sister to life again?

"How and when did you see her?" asked Billy.

"See her!" said the old woman; "why she came here several times, and begged sixpence of me to get something to eat. Why, the gal looked the picter of starvation and sickness. She wasn't lucky, wasn't Bell. I couldn't understand her; she was so soft, and when I did give her something, which I often did, though people say I'm a flint, she'd cry, and go on in that way, that my own eyes felt queer, an' its many years since they have, my boy."

"God bless you, Mrs. Truckler," said Billy, whose eyes were moist; "let me repay you double what you gave the poor girl."

"Four shillings I gave her, good silver," said Mrs. Truckler, never averse to receiving money.

"There's one pound for it," said Billy. "And do all you can to find out what's become of her. I would give pounds to know what's become of Sister Bell——"

"Would you, my fine covey?" said a voice close to Billy's side, and turning round he beheld his old mate Patsy, his eyes blinking as usual. Patsy was even more wretched in appearance than usual; his rags hung on mere bones, his face was weazened more than ever, and his eyes blinked unutterably. He looked upon Billy with the malignant glare of a disappointed demon, contrasting his comfortable appearance and clothes with his own misery.

"Well, who'd a thought to see you get along like this," said Patsy. "Fust I seed you done up like a makenick (mechanic) a minding horses and cows; now you comes out like a young swell, watch, chain and all, an' no Brummagem either. Bless my eyes! Chuck me in the gutter, swallow me whole with my horns, if this don't beat Bob

Smith. But it all comes o' bein' a meek an' holy repperbate. Tell you, boys," said Patsy, turning round to the crowd of open-mouthed unsavory larrikins, who were hanging round; "we'll all go to the Gospel 'all, and become meek an' holy repperbates; it pays, you see."

"We ain't fly enough for that," said an odd-looking little fellow, who wore an old fur cap.

"But I'll be even with you, you meek and holy repperbate," said Patsy, with a malicious grin, full, however, of the torture he felt in seeing this boy advanced so far above him; "I'll have you off to gaol for that search after learnin'."

"No you will not," said Billy.

"And why not?" asked Patsy, in a rage.

"First, because you will be taken up your-self."

"Don't care," said Patsy, sullenly; "I'd as soon be in gaol as sleeping in doorways, or in the street, and having nothing to eat except the air. Castieau's Hotel isn't bad quarters."

"Secondly," continued Billy, without flinching, "because I can make it worth your while."

"Oho!" said Patsy with a wink, but drawing away from his comrades that they might not suspect what he was going to receive.

"And I'm not afraid of anything in connection with the robbery," said Billy, "for I made ample restitution."

Patsy stared—"ample restitution" was Greek to him.

"Just you fork out, Mr. Billy," said he, "and don't come parson's lingo over me, you meek and holy repperbate."

Billy took out a piece of gold and handed it to Patsy, who clutched it like a tiger, gazed on it as if he would consume the beautiful metal, and then gave a deep sigh of intense pleasure.

"Not a blessed thing have I had to eat this day," said he, "and I'll make Mother Hash suffer."

Yet though Patsy had accepted that sovereign he half regretted that he could not take steps to have this upstart sent right straight to gaol. He hated Billy with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, as evil does the light. But now he remembered the words of Billy when he arrived, and felt grim satisfaction.

"You said that you would give something to know where Sister Bell is, didn't you?"

"I did," said Billy eagerly.

"Well then if you comes with me, and

waits until I have something to eat," said Patsy, "I'll fetch you to distinguished company, where you'll hear about her at all events."

Billy's heart beat fast, the emotions of joy and dread alternating. He knew well enough what Patsy meant by "distinguished company." But even if she had fallen to the lowest, a brother's love would once more raise her to a former life, which if it did not erase the past would atone.

Bidding Mrs. Truckler, who was not well pleased with the crowd of larikins, being afraid her shop would be rushed, good-bye, Billy followed Patsy to a cheap restaurant, kept by one Mother Hash, a large trollopy woman, who was floundering amongst her numerous customers, crying out "stewed mutton, stewed tripe," &c., in a decidedly Hibernian accent, interpolated with a running fire of badinage between herself and certain of the the fair creation who honored her house. The unwholesome steam of the place, its heat and unpleasant smell, with the grimy appearance of the customers, and the great round red face of the hostess, were anything but inviting. The walls were placarded with ill got up bills, announcing a carte equal to Scott's at 4d, and mentioning that the aristocracy of Victoria dined at that restaurant—not. A continuous clatter of knives and forks was kept up, and there seemed to be a sort of competition between everyone as to who would get most for 4d. The entrance of a "swell," for such Billy was in the eyes of all there, took them by surprise for a moment, but so soon as they had glanced him over they fell to again for dear life.

"Patsy, ye divil," said Mrs. Hash; "pay the fourpence ye owe me — you rapsallion, to run away when my back was turned."

"You shouldn't turn your back, then, on good customers," said Patsy.

"Divil a bite ye get here, unless ye pay," said Mrs. Hash, angrily; "ye little weasel, ye."

"And I will pay," said Patsy, proudly. "Change that, will ye?"

And he handed her the sovereign.

Mrs. Hash nearly dropped it on the floor.

"Ye divil; how did ye get this?" said she.

"Ax no questions, and I'll tell ye no lies," replied Patsy, taking a seat, and motioning Billy to his side. "It doesn't do to ax people here how they get their money."

"Go out and get change for that, Biddy,"

said Mrs. Hash. "What's the manin' of your bringing in a swell wid you, Patsy?"

"Don't you know him?" said Patsy.

"Well," cried Mrs. Hash; "if it's not that little divil, Billy, that always paid me so dacently. Shure I always thought he would come to good."

Billy shook hands with Mrs. Hash. Rough as she was, he had known her do kind acts, that were bright gems in the desert of his past life.

"An' shure often I gave a male to your poor sither for your sake," said Mrs. Hash, in a soft tone. "The creathure often spoke of ye. What'll ye have, gentlemen — Irish stew, dried hash, steaks, chops, sausages."

And the good woman went away to attend to her customers, the tears and the grease streaming down her face, which she had just freshly marked by drawing her hand across it.

"Patsy, I hope you will not be long," said Billy, after he had recovered the shock Mother Hash's words had given; "I must hasten to poor Bell."

"And I must get something to eat," coolly replied Patsy. "And you must take it easy, for the Lord knows where we'll find the company. It'll take a night to spot them."

And Patsy, having ordered Irish stew, attacked the strange compound called by that name with infinite gusto, while Billy sat by almost sick. Yet a few years since he well remembered that his greatest happiness consisted in his being in the possession of fourpence, so that he would be enabled to come in here and have supper. Did he not remember the times and times when he stood outside the window where half a carcass of mutton, some stale pies, immense pumpkins, and faded flowers formed the attraction, looking in at the door when others were eating, much as the Peri did at the Gate of Paradise. Now loathing alone was excited by that window and this room. How circumstances change mankind. And Billy had no doubt, if matters were to change again with him, if he were to lose the protection of Harry, he would be reduced to as great a strait as ever, and look upon even this place as a heaven. How earnestly he prayed that such might never be; how thankful he felt for those who had wrought the change, and how his heart blessed Linda. He remembered how through him she had quarrelled with her husband, but he hoped earnestly no evil consequences had followed.

His meditations were suddenly interrupted by a terrible uproar. Mother Hash, who had to keep a very sharp eye on her

customers, found one of them trying to slip out without paying, and the Hibernian spirit being roused, she seized the unlucky devil by the back of the neck and loudly demanded "fourpence, ye thavin' blagard; comin to a poor widdy's place to chate her children." The culprit, who no doubt was up to the business, at once protested he had no money. The customers, who were nearly finished, prepared to make a dart and get away while the row was at its height, but this was useless for the moment, Mrs. Hash's voice was heard in anger, the cook and his helper rushed to her assistance, brandishing formidable weapons in the shape of saucepans, cleavers, and the like. Mrs. Hash, after abusing the cause of this disturbance to her heart's content, rapidly divested him of his hat, coat and waistcoat, as a pledge for the fourpence, and then administering a vigorous kick sent him flying out of the front door, after which she resumed her cry of "stewed tripe, Irish stew, &c.," as if nothing had happened.

Billy was glad when Patsy had finished—and he truly made Mrs. Hash suffer—and they were once more out in the fresh air. The streets were gay with light and life, and the beautiful stars sparkled in the blue sky overhead.

"Well, I don't know where to catch my bird," said Patsy. "He may be at the lottery: let's go there."

They turned into Little Bourke street, and soon reached that quarter where the smell of opium, and other abominations unspeakable, told them they were amongst the Chinese. It was at the time when Chinese lotteries were going on, and every store was a lottery shop, in which numbers of boys and men were congregated, marking tickets or scanning the proof tickets, to see if they had got the requisite number of marks. Behind the counters were fat, oily Chinamen, who smiled benignly upon the unwashed crowd that hang around these fanes of Chance. But not altogether unwashed. Well-dressed youths, clerks, shop-boys, &c., were to be seen there, poor boys who were taking the first step in the downward paths that lead to ruin. All had come to take a chance, in the hope of winning something to put them on their legs, as they said—to put them in gaol would be the better term. Patsy scanned the crowd of eager faces. Presently he saw several larrikins he knew.

"How are you getting on, Jack?" he asked of a little tatterdemalion, who, although he could not read a line, could tell when he had five marks,

"Broke," said the goblin, "an' so's Joe, and Bill, an' Harry. Luck's gone clean agin us. Lend us a sixpence, sir," he asked of Billy.

"Never mind, old file," said Patsy; "my luck's in to-night, and I'll stand Sam like a brick. Here's half-a-crown to each of you, and if you'll come to Isaac's we'll have a drink, blow me if we don't."

The despondent quartette at once brightened up wonderfully.

"You always is a brick," said Jack, "But we'd all do the same thing. Bless me, who's this; why it's Bill Dawson. So help my taties, ain't you grand?"

Billy could not help thinking there was something very sinister in the looks of his old mates, who at once began to talk about the change that took place in him, and to look at his clothes, his watch-chain and pin with great interest.

And yet these faces were full of melancholy interest. He remembered how such a short time ago he had been the companion of these boys, and a waif like them in this very street. They had fallen; he had risen.

The party had their drink, and the little fellow called Jack at once declared for fan tan.

"We'll break Ah Tip's bank to-night," said he, "that we will; don't you make any mistake about it."

"Have you seen Billy the Swell, to-night?" asked Patsy, referring to Slabang.

"Seen him; no," replied Jack. "He's out o' luck, so I spects he's down by the Yarra, or at the Home."

"Out o' luck," cried Patsy; "Blow the fellow; why, he'd a note yesterday."

"Lost some of it at fan tan," said Jack, "and old Moucher eased him of the rest."

"Well, go and play fan tan, old flicks," said Patsy; "I'm on another lay to-night. Come on Billy; we'll search for him by the Yarra."

Down Swanston-street, flaring with light, the two went, several of the passers-by turning round to stare at the incongruity of a well-dressed youth walking with such a scarecrow as Patsy. On they walked to Prince's Bridge, where they glanced for a few moments to notice the reflection of the stars twinkling in the dark water, in which so many a weary heart has already sought rest, where so many a lost life will be ended in the days to come, when Melbourne becomes the gigantic metropolis it will be in time.

"She may be there," said Patsy, pointing to the river, with an unfeeling laugh.

"God forbid!" cried Billy.



"We'll go to the Home first," said Patsy. They took their way to the Immigrant's Home, that collection of unsightly sheds where so much misery has been housed in the short history of Victoria.

"Get out, you vagabond," said the porter, a grim old man, leaning on a stick, to Patsy; "you know Mr. Greig gave orders as you weren't to be let in."

"I don't want to be let in," said Patsy, proudly; "but this genelman want to see if a certain party's inside."

The word genelman at once caused a change in the porter's behavior. The moment he caught sight of Billy, who had kept a little back, off went his hat, and he at once declared his readiness to show him to the sleeping room. Here they found some sixty or seventy unfortunate wretches rolled up in coarse blankets. The air of the place was sickening, and yet Billy remembered well how glad he was one night when the cold winds were blowing in from the Bay to take shelter there. O! how he blessed Linda when he thought of the change she had wrought.

Slabang was not amongst the miserable wretches who shivered in that dreadful Black Hole, so horrible that many prefer the depths of the Yarra to seeking its refuge.

"Has a person named Will Slabang been here lately?" asked Billy of the porter.

"Not if I know it," was the reply, "orders have been gived long ago that he's not to come in, no matter how he is, or what name he takes."

"God help him," thought Billy, "if even this refuge is refused to him."

"I know where to find him," said Patsy, when they got outside the gate; "he's down the river bank with the hangman. Big Bess and that crew. Let's go down this way."

And he led Billy into a dark path below the Immigrant's Home. Billy could not prevent a certain fear entering his soul as he followed his strange guide. The night was clear and starlit. The glare of the city rose in the atmosphere like an aurora, and the solemn hum of the traffic broke on the air. Below him on the swamp the frogs were croaking like creatures of ill omen, while a little further on, the wattle scrub where he had witnessed that fearful scene which had been photographed on his soul in lines of fire, appeared, weird and dark. There was a strange horror in the scene, coupled with the dreadful past, that struck Billy to the soul.

"It was there I saw the awful murder," said he, coming close to Patsy.

"O! I dare say," said the other carelessly; "I dare say, it's not the first one; many a one's been killed there and then chucked into the Yarra."

"Is it safe to go there at this hour of night?" asked Billy.

"Of course, when I'm with you," said Patsy, but in such cold accents that Billy shuddered. "Look," continued Patsy, "there they are; I saw a match struck."

Yes; at no distance from the spot where Billy had seen the poor girl foully murdered, squatted several men and women whose forms were indistinctly seen in the darkness. It was a fit time, place, and people, for another dark deed.

There was a *fete* up the Yarra that night, and the splashing of the oars as the boats glided by sounded pleasantly but imparted an additional mystery to the scene. Now and then musical trills of laughter were heard, and the low, whispered conversation of lovers, varied occasionally by the boisterous merriment of some party of young men who cared not who heard their remarks. Then a dead silence would ensue, and the croak of the frogs would again be the only sounds of the night, while the wattle branches moved to and fro in the wind, as if keeping time. In the deepest recesses it seemed to Billy as if strange forms were peeping forth, the deities of the dead race that peopled the banks of the "Everflowing," ere great Melbourne had risen on its banks. And along those banks the slender willows grow, as if drooping and weeping for all the sin and shame the river has seen, and will see.

The light was not sufficient to show distinctly the party that squatted under a clump of wattles more than ordinarily thick, but Billy noticed bloated faces, uncleanly forms, and unsavory rags. He remembered well, scenes like this in the dreadful past, when he was glad to huddle amongst these fallen men and women for shelter. Horror! horror!

"You sneaking vagabond," came in strong, unwomanly tones from the only female present—Big Bess, the terror of the Melbourne swamp—"how dare you frighten decent people that way. Who the d—'s that with you?"

"Never you mind, Bess," said Patsy, in a commanding way. "It's a genelman, and you should be glad to be wisited by genelman."



"So we is, so we is," said the Melbourne executioner of that time, a repulsive looking creature, with Vandemonia in every detail of his face and person; if so be as he brings swipes. A genelman," he continued, with tipsy gravity, "is a pursing that tips the wink, and stands grog all round."

"Where's the beer?" ejaculated some one in a broken voice.

"I thought that'd bring you to life," said the finisher of the law; "just mention beer a'ter you'd buried Billy the Swell, and he'd break his coffin head first."

"Oho!" cried Patsy; "just the feller we want."

"No, you weazel," said the executioner, with a coarse laugh; "it's me you'll want, Patsy. I'll do your job easy, provided you stand Sam right."

"That's right," cried Bess; "an' mind you come to us with the guineas, old flick, or by—I'll murder you."

"By George, no fear of that, hold gal," replied the hangman.

"Where's the genelman's beer," muttered a fourth gruff voice.

Patsy whispered to the party. Billy, who was standing by disgusted and horrified, had a great mind to run for it, as he began to suspect foul designs, and he now repented his folly in coming to such a place, and among such people, with valuables. The river had been silent for several minutes, not an oar had rippled its dark expanse. Alone, unaided, what could he do against these creatures? Still Billy was a strong fellow; he had grown quite a model of manly symmetry, and his biceps were something to be afraid of, while he could beat any of the boys he knew at running. He, therefore, resolved to keep on his guard, and to take to the river if danger appeared. He knew these wretches were not strong, however evil their dispositions might be.

A great deal of whispering went on, Big Bess repeatedly pointing to Billy, and laughing in a way that made his flesh creep. At last Patsy said—

"They say you must shout afore they'll tell anything."

"Yes!" came from the fourth person, who remained in the shadow, but appeared to Billy to be of prodigious size and strength, "we must 'ave a drink."

"Beer!" cried Slabang, who seemed at the last gasp.

"How can you get any here?" asked Billy.

"Give me five shillings and I'll show you," said Patsy.

"There you are," said Billy, and no sooner had Patsy got the money, than, seizing a billycan, he flew away as if he were a spirit, not, however, before receiving an admonition from Big Bess to the effect that if he did not return he might expect to go to the hospital next day, in a state his mother would not know him.

It would be impossible to describe the feelings of shame and degradation experienced by Billy as he stood there, waiting for the return of Patsy. Nothing but his ardent determination to rescue his sister would have restrained him flying the detestable scene.

In a short time Patsy came back a little more leisurely. Then followed a scramble such as we cannot describe, all seeking to have a sup of that which to them was more than elixir vitæ, than life itself.

"Oh! thank God!" cried Slabang, when he had taken some; "I feel right again. I was dying."

"Good thing for you," said Big Bess. "Let's finish it Patsy."

"Glorious beverage," cried Slabang, rising; "It puts me in mind of the words of Charley Dodds, who died years ago:—

When shades of sorrow sit  
Across the pained and fevered brow,  
When sin and sadness sit  
On hearts that feel as ours do now,  
Then what's the way to cheer,  
The fainting, fluttering, fearful soul;  
Believe me, British beer  
Can warm, enliven, and control;  
Then drink, drink, drink,  
With a light heart and gay,  
Nor think, think, think,  
Of any reck'ning day."

"Stop your gab," cried the stern voice of the fourth of the quartette, "or the blue-bottles 'ill be down on us. Now as the genelman's stood treat, what does he want, Patsy?"

"Well ye see this chap as you thinks a genelman," said Patsy, with a sneer, "is only Billy Dawson as was my partner in the match business."

"Lawks, so it is," cried Big Bess, taking a closer look, "but who'd ha' thought it; he's such a fine swell now. 'Ow did he manage it, on the square, or by squaring the circle on paper? Betting, perhaps?"

"Neither, old file," replied Patsy; "he's got into a better line—the meek an' holy repperbate business."

"O!" said Bess; "that's a good game. I tried it when I was a gal with an old lady, and would ha' become a good convert, only two diamond rings o' hers interfered, and took me to the pawnbroker's, after which I had a visit to the judge, and took a voyage to this part of the world, expenses paid."

"But what does he want?" asked the mysterious fourth.

"To find out something about his sister Bell," replied Patsy.

Slabang rose in a strange, confused way.

"Poor boy," he said; "poor boy!"

"Oh! do you know anything about her?" asked Billy, earnestly.

"Yes," said Big Bess, but in a much quieter tone, for even this terrible woman was not wholly bereft of feeling; "I knowed Bell, but she was a gal o' no sperit and couldn't get along. She would stick to that Hughey, and he didn't want her. She could have done well if she had liked, but she wouldn't go with other gals."

What balm this was to Billy's heart. Now he felt convinced that, however poor Bell had fallen, she had never come down to the level of these dreadful creatures.

"You needn't trouble about her, though," continued Bess; "she's where we'll all go, she's dead!"

Dead! Bell, gentle sister Bell, who had nursed him so tenderly, when sunshine had been theirs, who helped to make home happy when the shadows were falling, whose sweet face had been the dearest recollection of the past, dead! beyond his love or pity! He could even now fancy her bending over the cot where Popsy and he were lying, bidding them farewell. Dead! gone to the Land, which the curtain of Eternity shrouds from sinful mortals' eyes. Dead!

There was another whose tears fell fast as Billy's, whose sobs were strong as his. Slabang, the reprobate, wept, but alas! he always did when sentimentality and beer were uppermost, which was frequent. But Slabang said nothing. He was in the presence of the brother of the woman he had loved in his better days, but he felt himself fallen so immeasurably below him, that he would not speak, and tell him what he knew. Perhaps the best thing was to let the poor boy remain in ignorance.

Dead! Well, thought Billy, perhaps it was better thus. Perhaps it was better that she should have passed away into the Silent Land, else had she fallen even to semblance of this woman. God forbid! Poor Bell may have been wretched, outcast, but not like this, not like this.

"Ow she died, I don't know," said Big Bess, "but I heard tell some pals seen her in the dead-house, and she was buried by the Government."

"Come, come," said the burly ruffian, whom we have called the fourth, but who in

reality was the great Bob Smith, who had fallen from his great degree, and now was an outcast of the outcasts; "you needn't blubber so much about her, Billy, she's dead, and happier than us. Take a drop of this liquor, it'll cheer you up."

Billy at once recognised Bob Smith, and wondered how one, once so prosperous had fallen to this degree. For be it observed there are degrees amongst outcasts just as amongst other people. There are grades which will not mingle with others, and certainly Bob Smith in Billy's time had moved in a circle, which looked down upon the scrub people. But the greatest men have a fall.

Billy thrust the can from him, the smell absolutely turned him sick. But that moment he was seized by Big Bess, Bob Smith and Patsy. The hangman at once shammed tipsiness for he prided himself on knowing the law, and though anxious enough to share in the plunder, had no desire to become an accomplice.

It was a terrible moment for Billy. Never in his adventurous, though short life, had death presented itself to him in so dreadful a form, and with such certainty. The moment the grip of the harpies were upon him his whole position flashed upon his mind, like a gleam of lightning. These creatures were determined to have his money, the greed for gold wherewith to procure drink was now uppermost in their hearts, and overmastered every other feeling. As he knew them, he felt certain they would murder him to prevent the consequences of detection. Death, a horrible death, was before him, unless with one bold effort he could free himself. And with three to one how could he? No help was at hand, there would be no spectators to the terrible tragedy, but the ghostly wattles that had witnessed the murder which took place before his eyes here long ago. Life, life, was dear to him, had been dear enough when he was a poor wail without any hope, now with all the bright panorama of a happy existence opening before him, it was doubly desirable.

"Choke him, choke him," said Bob Smith, in a voice so demoniacal that it would have terrified the boldest hearts; "choke him, Bess, you know how; I'll see he don't cry out."

And Billy could not. With a well-known grip, Bob Smith had shut his mouth. O! God was he to die thus and so early.

Big Bess at once made for Billy's throat. He had had that fearful grip on his throat before, and he knew its terrible clutch,

With all the strength he could command, he kept her hands from his throat, at the same time making Patsy fly through the bushes like a football. He had now to contend with Bob Smith and Big Bess, two powerful brute animals, fighting for the prize of gold, wherewith to procure pleasure. It was a terrible struggle, youth fighting for life with these bestial beings. Bob Smith saw that Billy's strength was great, and he made several attempts to disable him, but here Billy's knowledge acquired in the past stood him in good stead, and he parried the blows aimed, with great skill. Still Big Bess hung on like a tiger, seeking to clutch his throat, and if once she seized it all was over!

"Help, Slabang, help," cried Bob Smith, "help, scragman, and none of your d—d shamming. He's got lots of cash, a gold chain, a watch, a diamond pin, why, it'll set us up, come, come."

The executioner could not stand this.

"Halves," he cried rising, "and no splitting."

"Honor bright!" panted Bess and Bob Smith.

And now the four, Patsy, Bob Smith, the hangman, and Big Bess, set on Billy. There was no hope. A few seconds and he would be lying a distorted corpse on the ground. Bess's fingers were on his throat; ah! she had it at last!

Billy heard the sound of oars. Then a singing came into his ears, the trees seemed to whirl round and—

"By the God that made me," said Slabang, who had stood by without interfering; "I won't stand this. Four to one, cowardly devils; this boy came here to search for his sister, poor lost Isabella Dawson, and by the God that made me I'll not see him strangled."

This good resolve appeared to have given new life to the wretched outcast. He rushed in and made several vigorous blows at Big Bess, which caused her to relinquish her hold and scream. Billy, seeing there was a chance of life again, fought with all the strength of despair, and crippled Patsy.

"Kill the sneak," cried Bob Smith, more aggravated by the apostacy of Slabang, than anything else; "kill him."

And the unfortunate Slabang was at once tackled by Smith, and blow after blow fell upon him. Soon he was at the feet of his persecutor, a helpless bundle, not, however, until he had cried vigorously for help.

"There," cried Bob Smith, "now we'll settle you," he continued speaking to Billy,

who, though very weak, was struggling desperately with Big Bess and the executioner.

"Not so fast," said a firm strong voice behind the ruffian.

Three tall strong gentlemen stood beside them. A glance sufficed to show Bob Smith and his friends that they were overpowered, and with terrible oaths they fled into the depths of the scrub.

Can description give the slightest idea of the unutterable joy felt by Billy, thus rescued from a horrible death? But what was his joy to find he had been saved by Harry Robertson, who had been at the fête and was returning to Melbourne, but having heard the screams and struggles on the bank had hastily put in the boat and come to the rescue. Very little explanation sufficed to make Harry comprehend what had occurred. His compassion was at once excited by the sight of Slabang, especially when Billy told him his noble conduct. They thought he was dead, and Harry lit a match. What was his horror to discover in this fallen creature his old friend Will Slabang, who had been so kind to the young clerk, and used to help him through all his difficulties. He had witnessed his fall, but he never thought it would be as low as this.

"Good God!" cried Harry, "another of those who experienced the working of the curse; Will Slabang in this condition! And to think that to this, Robert, dear Robert, may fall, is falling. It is too much."

The wretched creature opened his eyes and looked wildly round on the faces that were looking into his, so very different to those he usually saw. He at once recognised Harry.

"Go away," he said weakly, "away, you bring back the memory of the past, the happy past. I tried to save the boy."

One of Harry's companions was a doctor. He examined Slabang and then said that he had better be conveyed to the hospital at once, as in all probability his system would not be able to stand the injuries he had received. Indeed, said the doctor, the man had been dying for some time. They carried him to the boat, and as soon as they arrived at Prince's Bridge a cab was procured and the party drove to the hospital, where Slabang was placed in the accident ward.

"I have something to tell you about your sister," said he to Billy, as the party were leaving, "something important."

"Don't exert yourself in the slightest," said the surgeon, "to-morrow you may be

able to speak, but I forbid any exertion to-night. If there is any danger of death, gentlemen, I will have a magistrate sent for and his dying deposition taken."

With this they were forced to be content, and Mr. Robertson and Billy proceeded down Swanston-street. Billy, although greatly wearied by his long struggle, had received no material injury. Harry, however, desired to take him home as soon as possible, that he might have a rest. They therefore walked down the street pretty rapidly.

It was eleven o'clock. The theatres were just coming out, and as they walked along Swanston-street they could see a crowd of people going down Bourke-street. It was a gay and interesting scene. Billy could not but wonder at the rapid changes that had taken place that day. Indeed, the events that had transpired were like a dream. Had it not been for the extraordinary intervention of Harry he would now be lying cold and dead in the Yarra, to be unheard of until the water gave up its prey, and the morgue received its victim.

There is in Swanston-street a certain hotel, kept by a hardfaced man, which, respectable enough in the day, becomes at night the haunt of all the fast characters in the city. Skittles, Anonyma, Synonyma, and their sisters block up its rooms, and ogle Dash, Poodle, Doodle, Highflier, and others who haunt the place as possessing the true essence of fast life. Hansom after hansom drives up in the nighttime, and forth step the gayest of the *demi monde* and the fastest of the youth of Melbourne, who glory in their shame. The rooms are full of splendidly dressed sirens, surrounded by foolish mariners who fancy they can approach the deceitful coast close enough without shipwreck. At carnival times, such as race-meetings, the hotel is in its glory; crowds of country visitors glance in to see one of the "sights" of Melbourne. Then the waiters fly about amongst silks and satins and lace, in a hopeless bewildered way. The opening of champagne bottles is heard, and the gurgle of the generous liquid as it flows into the peculiar glasses that receive it. Loud is the laughter, epigrammatic the conversation, boisterous the mirth, but very little serves to turn all this into a very den of devils, showing the true colors of all there. Here many and many a downward career has been commenced; here flit about creatures, male and female, who have compassed the ruin of many a bright and beautiful human

soul, the pride of a father, the pet of a mother, the loved of sisters, friends, and brothers; yes, here they flit through these rooms as if on their souls hung no burden of blood, as if they had nothing to do with these blasted lives; but thank God, there is a just Judge, who in His own good time will bring them to shame. Many go there merely to see, but soon find the truth of the lines—

"Vice is a monster of such hideous mien,  
That to be hated needs but to be seen;  
But once endured, invited, and caressed,  
Becomes a welcome and a frequent guest."

Beware of danger in time, young man, and you are safe.

Billy and Mr. Robertson were just passing, when, with a tremendous flourish, a hansom drove up, and there stepped on to the pavement two characters well-known to the reader, Robert Wilton and Marian Lee. In the former there was a great change; in the latter none. Robert looked magnificent. His face was flushed and full of varying expressions; his form seemed to have even more elasticity, even greater grace. Marian was simply superb; dressed magnificently, but with that wonderful taste which always made her appearance so very perfect, there was not a spectator, at least under a certain age, who did not feel a thrill as the beautiful woman passed by. Amongst these none were effected more than Billy. His whole frame shook.

Harry was also deeply moved. This, then, was the cause of the terrible change that had come over Robert. O! poor boy, how could it end but in shame and degradation. A sudden impulse took possession of Harry.

"Come with me, Billy," said he; "there's some person here I wish to see."

It was with difficulty they wedged themselves into one of the rooms, crowded as they were with glittering company. Harry's idea was to try the effect of his presence on Robert, to see if he could win him to his home, to be reconciled. He hungered and thirsted for the love of this dear foolish fellow. Since that memorable day at Balclava, Robert had never spoken to him. Had Harry known what had occurred that night, he would as soon have thought of satisfying his craving desire for reconciliation as of attempting a miracle.

Surrounded as he was by a crowd of fawning flatterers, it is probable Robert would have never noticed Harry had not the eyes of Marian, those dreamy dreadful orbs, fallen upon Billy, whose gaze was rivetted upon her. She looked upon the boy with a



critical eye; noted that he was budding into a splendid youth, and then met his gaze as earnestly as he did hers. What did Marian think then? Another bird coming into the lure! But there was in her mind a strange feeling as she gazed, a dread that gathered she knew not why. The boy fascinated her.

It was not long before Robert turned his eyes towards the same spot, and then he met Harry's sorrowful gaze. The blood rushed to Robert's face, and then back to his heart; he rose unsteadily, and glowered at the friend he once loved so well, with an expression that could be translated: "Why hast thou come to torment me before the time? Why hast thou come to bring back to me all the sweet memories of the past, like so many furies to torment my soul and speak of fearful judgment to come? Away!" At that moment there was no person against whom Robert felt so irritated, as the calm youth who was surveying him pitifully. He worked himself up into a fury. Was this man watching his very secret actions, prying into everything that he might gloat over him?

Striding through the amazed throng Robert walked up to Harry, and ere the latter could say a word, cried in loud and insulting tones:

"Look at someone else, not at me. Don't watch those who do not desire your company."

There was an instant rush from all the rooms. The habitués of that place gloriously loved a row, and must have a sight of this one at the peril of wholesale destruction to their dress.

"Robert!" said Harry in confused tones, for he was wholly unused to such scenes, and thought his voice would quiet his friend. Instead of doing so it still further aggravated him. We are never so angry as when in the wrong; never so wroth as with those we love.

"To be wroth with those we love  
Both work like madness on the brain."

"A ring, a ring," cried Metallic Megatherium, now in his element, and swearing like a steam engine.

"Yes, a ring, a ring," cried his three Israelitish friends and the rest of the spectators.

Harry now wished he had not ventured here.

"I am ready," said Robert, throwing himself into a pugilistic posture.

"Good God!" said Harry, horrified.

"Fair play, ladies and gentlemen," cried

Megatherium, endeavoring to make a ring, while Detective Meddle quietly slid down stairs, as he feared to be implicated in such proceedings.

"Gentlemen," said Harry, recovering his presence of mind, and taking Billy's hand, "I have no quarrel with Mr. Wilton, nor will I have, no matter how he insults me—he knows why. Please allow me to pass."

His air was so majestic and commanding, his voice so different to what was customarily heard there, that the whole crowd subsided, and Harry and his *protégé* passed out amidst the admiration of all, and on regaining the street, sprang into the hansom that had brought Marian and Robert there, and drove away.

Robert stood for a few minutes like a wrathful Apollo, then the last look, the last words of his friend, rushing upon his soul, all his old tenderness returned, and he rushed down stairs, calling "Harry, Harry." It was too late! And so he threw away another stay.

All that night the face of the handsome boy who had accompanied Harry haunted Marian, and dawn found her awake, wondering about that handsome form.

"Billy," said Harry, after he had in some degree recovered himself, "never yield to the fatal fascination that leads youth to that terrible place. Form an affection early, and choose your partner for life, and then be true to her. But above all, beware of beings like the beautiful creature you saw at the side of your old master, Robert Wilton. Shun her, shun those who are like her, as you would death. Calm, and beautiful, and smiling, she is there to-night, decked in silk and diamonds, and satin sheen, dispensing around all that surpassing loveliness and consummate art can to ensnare the human soul, but O! Willy, if the ghosts of the many who, through her, have come to untimely ends, to death, and worse than death, were to rise around her, what a fearful company there would be in these brilliant rooms to-night; if the curses and lamentations of the mothers, the fathers, the sisters, the brothers, the friends of those whose ruin she has compassed, were to be heard, what a hideous din would fill the air! Willy, that woman is as cold and calculating as she is beautiful; she has none of the foibles that bring her sisters to an ill end early. She is, in her way, a philosopher, and while not disdaining love and pleasure, looks on money as the great aim of existence. Cold, and heartless, and cruel, she resembles one of those terrible



demons who, the better to ruin their victims, assume a fascinating human form. May her end be as the end of those she has sent to eternal torments; she has that poor boy in her toils, and soon will have achieved her purpose with him."

"Oh! sir, dear sir, the saviour of my life, my preceptor in all that is high and good, the father of my intellect," cried Billy, bursting into hysterical sobs, "don't, don't, you will kill me, O! don't speak of her, don't speak of her—she—she is my—sister—Mary."

## PART X.

### THE TRIUMPH OF LOVE.

"The dark clouds gather and the tempests lour;  
Heaven aid the helpless in this fearful hour;  
Send to the soul in shadow rays of light,  
And give the guilty judgment swift and right."

"A lady has been waiting for you for some time," said Harry's servant, as Billy and himself stood on the steps.

"A lady," said Harry; "who can she be?"

"I don't know, sir," was the reply; "she wears a very thick veil, and did not give her name."

"There is no doubt," said Harry to Billy, kindly, and in that winning tone which had won so many hearts, "that your situation is a terrible one; a sister dead—a sister worse than dead. But, my poor Willy, do not think this will estrange me from you; on the contrary, I will give you even greater help and sympathy. When Slabang has recovered, I little doubt he will be able to throw a light upon the sad fate of your poor sister, and when you have done all you can for her memory——"

"I wish I could lay my hand on the wretch who dragged her down," said the youth, his form dilating. "The pitiful scoundrel; I would never leave him, until I had revenged the fall of her I loved so well."

"Leave him in the hands of the Great Power which rules over our destinies," said Harry, solemnly; "sooner or later his sin will find him out. As for Bell, let us hope the lessons of her youth were effectual, and that she died in the hope of a better life. Indeed, there is some reason to believe she did. As for Marian, it will be your duty to try as a brother to snatch her from the terrible course she is pursuing."

The boy shook his head.

"If what you say, sir, is true," he asked, "how is it possible? Stained as she is with the blood of many and many a victim offered

at the shrine of her avarice and unholy beauty, how can forgiveness be accorded? how can she return to virtue?"

"Think of Mary Magdalen," said Harry.

"I know her nature so well, sir," said Billy, with a deep sigh, "that I fear hopes of amendment are vain. Gold, admiration, conquest, love, brightness, and gaiety, are so dear to her, that she could not be persuaded to change. She will die as she has lived. But, O sir! the shame, the ignominy, I feel. I had begun to taste the pleasures of a new life under your fostering care, my mind had begun to open, my intellect to expand, my self-respect to be established, when this terrible blow destroys the pleasant castles I had built, and they vanish like the baseless fabric of a dream, leaving not a wrack behind. I feel as if I were unworthy to be amongst mankind."

"Divest yourselves of such melancholy thoughts," said Harry, tenderly. "Look not on the dark side, but rather hope for the best. And now I must see who this strange visitor is."

Leaving Billy to sit in his room brooding over the sorrows of his young life, Harry entered the room into which the strange lady had been shown. It was furnished in a subdued but rich style, which showed well under the soft light of the chandelier, and threw out into bold relief, the elegant figure of a lady clad in dark garments. Her face was hidden under a thick veil, but when Harry entered she lifted this, and revealed the features of Linda Wilton.

Linda Wilton! But not the Linda Wilton we introduced in the first part of this work; bright as morning, beautiful as day, smiling on the idol of her soul, dreaming glorious visions of the splendid future. Her face had lost the rounded *contour* which had given to it such a grace; it was pinched and over-spread with an anxious expression, mingled with a sort of stony despair. Her eyes were dark and sunken, her cheeks pale as ashes. Her whole aspect told such a tale of misery that Harry started back in a kind of amaze. Years had elapsed since he had conversed with, months since had seen, her. Once she was to be seen on the Block every day shopping, but for a long time she had become a recluse, and the result of his last visit to Robert's house had not been lost on Harry. He knew that ever since that memorable night when Robert and Linda had quarrelled they had lived unhappily, and that Robert had been steadily walking in the way that

leads to ruin, but he was not prepared for this terrible change in the once beautiful, once happy Linda, whom in days gone by he had loved so passionately. Did he not do so now? Perish the thought.

"My dear Mrs. Wilton, what has occurred?" said Harry, rushing forward to take her hand. He was not a moment too soon, for the poor girl's overstrained nerves had given way, and she fainted.

While the housekeeper was bathing the pale but beautiful face, still and cold as marble, Harry gazed with a bursting heart upon the wreck Robert had made. He had forgiven his own injuries, but this he could hardly forgive. What could make a man leave so pure and lovely a creature for the terrible siren in whose company he had left the infatuated boy? And then came back to Harry's mind, in vivid tableaux, the scenes of folly and dissipation he had quitted, where, no doubt, Robert was still revelling, while this poor thing lay here. The blood boiled in Harry's veins as he thought of it, especially when he considered that this poor lady was now without a protector in the world except the man who was called her husband, for her parents had died, leaving her, unfortunately, no means of her own.

Harry was not a perfect man; none of us are; and as he gazed upon the face of her he had loved so greatly, that first and sweetest passion began feeling by feeling to return, until he compelled himself to turn his eyes away that he might not be tempted beyond his strength. He knew such thoughts were unworthy a man and a Christian, but their existence was too painfully apparent to be doubted. He had but to combat them as best he could.

Looking upon the wreck that remained of poor Linda, and thinking of the wrongs he had himself suffered, together with the gathering strength of his early passion, it would be thought all the love Harry had felt for Robert would die away in the presence of stronger passions, especially when every support was cut from under it. But it was not so; that pure unselfish beautiful love, born in his boyhood and destined to last for ever, struggled nobly against every enemy, and strove to save Harry from the commission of a great crime.

"Such thy power, O, Love."

"Harry," said Linda—the old tones he had listened to so eagerly, and which had

thrilled him to the heart in bygone days—when they were left alone, "I have come to you as the only friend in the wide world, to confide in you my sorrows. O Harry! permit me to call you by the name I used when we were children together—my heart is broken."

She spoke with a terrible tone of despair in her voice, and could proceed no further, sobs checking her utterance.

There was terrible power in this. Harry felt and acknowledged it; bowed down to the power of this poor weak girl. The dreams of the past were again hovering around him.

And he drew nearer to Linda, and listened to the long list of sorrows she had to pour forth; listened with growing interest, every moment becoming more helpless in the grasp of the great passion that had once engrossed his whole soul.

"Oh! that unhappy night," said Linda swaying her body to and fro; "Oh! that unhappy night; I wish I had died before it came. From the few words I then uttered half in jest, half in earnest, what direful effects have sprung. The seed was small, but it has grown into a mighty upas tree overshadowing our lives and poisoning existence."

"But has Robert continued to be estranged ever since?" asked Harry.

"No, no," replied Linda; "it would have been better had it been so. After that quarrel we grew again as loving as ever, and for a short time I thought all was well. I was mistaken. It was not long before the clouds appeared on his face again, and then he fell away, and many a weary night I spent watching and waiting for the dear one who did not come. In vain I tried all I knew to reclaim him. He would be sweet and loving enough for a while, but then the evil fit soon came on again, and each time he grew worse. But how sweet were those glimpses of sunshine between; words cannot give expression to the unutterable rapture of the reconciliation, the days of love and joy that followed. But they were like the bright beams of the sun in the intervals of a tempest, the after darkness being rendered denser by contrast. I cannot describe to you everything, Harry; but I have passed through what has aged me by years, and ought to have turned my hair gray. Woman is naturally jealous, and I, Harry, have been dreadfully wronged. In the still night as my husband has slept

by my side, I have heard him utter the names of others in the tones of affection, but he has never mentioned mine! O! the cruelty of this; the injustice to one who loves him so truly! Often and often the direct and darkest thoughts entered into my heart, though I had not courage to carry them out. The days, the nights of misery, I have spent; I, a lady in sentiment and feeling, outraged thus. Would you believe me, Harry, I have seen him walking with the woman who has caused all, the flaunting creature who has destroyed the poor fellow——"

Here her anguish was uncontrollable.

"But this is not all," continued Linda. "Dreadful as it was to stand the loss of the love of a husband, it is even more painful for the woman, who really and disinterestedly loves a man, to know that he is in great danger. And he is, Harry. The poor boy is surrounded by evils that will soon close around him and ruin him for ever. For months and months his sleep has been like that of the criminal about to be executed. He is ever muttering about cheques and prisons and suicides, and in his sleep he struggles with the foes his imagination creates. Even in the day he is nervous; the opening of a door, the ringing of a bell, sends the blood rushing to his heart."

Again there was a revulsion. Harry's love for Robert was strangling the other fatal passion. His heart bled for the sufferings of the poor fool.

"His fall is not far off," gasped Linda, "and he appears to know it. When it will come, O! how terrible it will be. Now he is the adored of Melbourne; there is no man more potent, no man who dashes through life as he does. It will be terrible, terrible. To think of him in a prison, to think of seeing him one day on the dripping slabs of the morgue, a bloated corpse, such as I have seen described in the newspapers——"

Here her grief broke out afresh.

"Poor Robert," said Harry, involuntarily, "and yet he has brought this judgment upon himself. Remember the saying, '*Justo Judicio Dei judicatus sum, justo judicio Dei condemnatus sum.*'"

"O! how I suffer, how I suffer," moaned Linda. "Harry, I have made up my mind that I shall never return to Robert's—my husband's—house again."

Harry started, and rose to his feet. The dreadful passion was again overmastering him.

"Listen," said Linda, after another flood

of tears, "listen, and hear how I have been used, and what has caused me to resolve to separate from Robert for ever."

And Linda told her tale disjointedly, and broken with sobs. It will suit us better, however, to narrate the occurrences ourselves.

The more Robert absented himself from his home, when he did stay at home at night he usually brought Hugh with him. Shut out as he was from superior society, Hugh appeared to take the greatest pleasure in his visits to Linda's home. She, poor girl, rendered frantic by what in her mind she set down as the loss of Robert's love, behaved very rudely at times to Hugh, whom she looked upon as in some degree instrumental in the great change that had so overshadowed her life. She tried every possible endearment, but although Robert was extremely gentle, and caressed her at times as warmly as of old, he would not listen to her prayers, nor would he brook reprimand. She had nothing to do therefore but sit quietly at home and watch the gradual destruction of her fondest dreams. She found that so far as she was concerned Robert had a will of his own too strong to move.

Hugh, who now appeared to have gained the completest ascendancy over Robert, never omitted to go home with him whenever Robert was to spend the evening in his own house, which was not of very frequent occurrence. On such occasions he would sit and gloat over the matchless beauty of the woman whom he now worshipped with a cruel sensual idolatrous love. Linda, pure-souled girl, never dreamed that her innocent beauty was poisoning the soul of this man, who, to her, was so disagreeable. Her coyness and evident dislike to his society only added fuel to the dangerous passion that had now gained the utmost ascendancy over him. He never left her presence except intoxicated with her beauty, and more than ever resolved to bring her down to his own level. There was even a furious rage mixed with his love at times. He would triumph over this cold, insensible woman. What did she mean by still loving idolatrously the man who was casting all the rich stores of her affection to the winds, while she coldly refused to listen to him who would have thrown at her feet his fortune. He loved her, but as the wolf loves the lamb. And yet so deep and so strong was the love or passion of this man that it seems probable he would have been constant to Linda had she been tempted to leap into the perdition he was preparing for the poor soul.

Tempted! God knows that few human beings have been so tempted or tried as Linda. It was a marvel how, in her desperation, she did not commit some indiscretion that would have shut her out of the pale of respect. Day by day Robert grew more estranged, and Hugh took every occasion, when he was absent, to represent to Linda, in glowing colors, the life her loved one led; his faithlessness, his wild vagaries, the fast life he led while she was moping alone in the little villa at Balaclava. Picture after picture he painted, with the ardor of one who loved his art, carefully, however, for he was fully aware of the nature with which he had to deal, and knew, in order to be successful, he must traduce Robert with an appearance as if he loved him, and sorrowed for his fall.

In time Hugh grew bolder and would call when Robert was absent, always making the excuse that he had come to see him. No man was more deeply imbued with the passion of gambling, and loo was to him as life itself, but he often rose from the loo-table where Robert and himself were playing, and sought Balaclava. The one powerful passion would overmaster the other. Indeed, his terrible infatuation grew so strong, so agonising, that it was with difficulty he restrained himself from measures that would have spoiled all. He hesitated not to aid Robert in that terrible career that was destroying him, and tried by every means to hasten the denouement.

In her loneliness, Linda almost felt thankful for the company of even this man. Harry never visited her now, although she yearned for his grave kind face, that she might lean upon him, and beseech him to save Robert. She feared this terrible man; there was a fearful light in his eyes that she could not understand. She felt certain that there was something evil in it, but she never suspected the truth.

A bright day had come to a close, and the sun was setting in crimson, when Robert returned from the city. As usual his face was flushed with champagne and excitement, his form was dilated, his manner quick and excited. She was waiting for him on the verandah, and thought as he came springing up the little walk, that she had never seen anyone so unutterably fascinating and handsome. No wonder that he was so courted and admired; it was not strange that he left her, poor thing, unnoticed. So splendid a man was more than she deserved.

He took no notice of her except to say "Well, Linda," and then rushed into the

house and remained for half an hour in his room, going over books and papers while she saw to the dinner. Nicely was the table spread and the poor girl was felicitating herself on having his company for at least an hour when he came out of his room hurriedly and brushed past her into the passage, took down his hat and umbrella and walked out. "I have no time to wait for dinner," he said quietly. As he said this his eyes met the sad longing gaze of his wife. It seemed as if he could not resist that look. Turning round he folded her in his arms and imprinted a passionate kiss on her lips, saying, "Poor Linda, it will be all well, yet."

How happy she felt. That kiss lingered upon her lips like the seal of hope; for a long time she had not enjoyed such a pleasure. Hope came rushing into her mind again, and for a little while she lay on the sofa in a pleasurable reverie. It was rudely disturbed by a pull at the bell.

"Mr. Hanlon," said Mrs. Moran, opening the door.

Linda started up with ill-concealed vexation. She would have preferred to have been left alone with her thoughts.

Hugh was well-dressed this evening. The fault into which he had fallen, owing to his association with the fast fraternity, that of dressing flashily, was avoided, and he was dressed in the simple attire of a gentleman. He had, indeed, studiously kept from any display savoring of the people he moved amongst now. He was again the handsome gentlemanly man Linda had known years ago. She was surprised, perhaps pleased, to find the change, and noted in her mind how different Hugh appeared. She had wondered, indeed, how any man who had been reared as a gentleman could descend to dress after the fashion of the fancy.

"Is Robert in?" asked Hugh, after he had seated himself.

He knew well enough he was not.

"No," replied Linda; "he has gone back to Melbourne in a hurry, not even waiting for his dinner."

It was only civil to ask Hugh to dine while he was there, so Linda asked him. He did not refuse the invitation.

"I wish I had met him," said Hugh. "I have most important tidings to tell him."

Linda shuddered. Was the downfall coming so soon?

Dinner was taken in a perfunctory manner. Very little conversation passed, Hugh being too deep in the contemplation of Linda, and the poor girl too full of thoughts of the kiss



Robert had given her. Hugh noticed perfectly well the great change that had taken place in her once radiant beauty, and he dwelt upon it as an index that the time had come for his attack to begin. He thought if he were only to succeed in his designs he would soon bring the roses to her cheeks again.

She played for him after dinner was over, and he sang "Il balen" with an earnestness that surprised his accompanist. Time after time his hand rested upon hers, only for a moment, but the touch was full of meaning, and thrilled him to the soul.

"Mrs. Wilton," he said quietly, during a pause. "I am grieved to see the manner in which Robert is acting. It cannot last long; the end is not far off."

Linda trembled.

"I know it is something terrible," she said, "but he said to-night it would be all well in time."

"All well," said Hugh, bending towards her. "Indeed! I tell you that he has involved himself inextricably, borrowed from his best friends and deceived them, and he is now carrying on with money obtained from a source that will not be undiscovered long. He is doomed."

"Please don't kill me," said Linda, bowing her head. "O! don't say he will become like the men I have read of in the newspapers."

"He will," said Hugh, relentlessly; "he will. I speak to you in this way, because I don't want to see you ill-used as you have been. It is a shame, a disgrace, a crime, that he should be allowed to drag you down."

Linda bowed her head still lower, and the moisture came into her eyes.

"He took you from a happy home," continued Hugh; "you, a pure lady, and what does he do now? He neglects you, and gives the best of his hours to creatures I cannot name."

Linda made a deprecatory gesture.

"I will speak," continued Hugh; "I will not remain silent when such monstrous wrongs are unrevenged. It is your duty to stand such treatment no longer."

"What can I do," asked Linda, despairingly.

"Do," was the answer. "Leave him, and let him riot with those who are dragging him down to their own level."

"No, no, no," said Linda, "I am his wife and I will remain with him. I—love—him."

"That's the way with all women," said Hugh, somewhat savagely; "the more they

are trampled upon the greater their love. I have no patience with your sex."

"He will repent in time," said Linda, "and be saved."

"No he will not," hissed Hugh, "he will go down to shame and degradation before another month is past."

Linda looked up into the man's face. There was an expression in it that made her flesh creep. She began to wonder whether it was right to stop with this man.

Hugh hesitated. He saw that he was on exceedingly dangerous ground, and that a wrong step would be fatal. He changed his tactics.

"Mrs. Wilton," he dare not call her Linda as yet; "the time has come for you to act for yourself. Dress yourself and put on your veil and come with me, and I will show you what Robert does."

"That will not be correct," said Linda. Yet a craving desire entered into her mind to see what her husband did, to know what occupied his time so as to preclude him from staying with her, and then a wish was formed in her mind to know who was that Marian, of whom he spoke in his dreams.

Hugh looked narrowly into her face and saw that she was anxious to go. He felt a joy suffuse his soul. Surely after witnessing the terrible scenes he would place before her eyes she would become frenzied with bitter despair and jealousy, and be an easy prey.

"You cannot possibly commit an impropriety in seeking to know what your husband is doing," said Hugh. "Besides, Mrs. Wilton, I hope that my escort will shield you from any injurious comment. It is of the utmost importance that you should see what this man's important engagements are."

For at least an hour he debated with Linda upon the subject, and at last succeeded in so arousing her curiosity that she could resist no longer, and dressing herself in a peculiar garb and putting on a very thick black veil, she took his arm and went out. Several times, however, she was upon the point of turning back, for her heart began to fail her, and she became more and more undecided as to the correctness of the course she was taking. Nothing but the sense of terrible wrong and the curiosity which is so powerful with women, could have forced Linda to take such a step. But once in the train there was no going back.

In the train Hugh was compelled to maintain a steady reserve, for he soon saw that any attempt to be familiar with Linda would only open her eyes and destroy all his hopes

at once. He felt tortured at this, and writhed under the enforced self-denial. But the time would come when his reward would be complete.

On reaching Collins-street Hugh engaged a hansom, and sat by the side of his trembling intended victim. He was somewhat puzzled to know how to show to her Robert's faults at their very worst. He knew that this was a great field-night at the —— Hotel, where play would be terribly high, but how could he introduce a lady. He knew Mr. Mamony, the proprietor, so intimately, however, and that worthy was under so many obligations to him, that he doubted not he could succeed.

"Promise me, Mrs. Wilton," said Hugh, with some earnestness; "promise me, that whatever you may see you will not in any manner commit yourself. Promise this, or I will go no further."

"I promise to do nothing," replied Linda. "I may faint but that is all."

Up a staircase flaring with gas he led the trembling girl, and then left her in a little ante-room. She heard the sounds of voices in loud conversation. What was that? Yes, it was his voice, Robert's manly ringing tones. She could have fallen to the floor with excitement.

Hugh sought the room where the great gambling scene was transpiring. The talent were not busy that day; so, with their usual determination not to allow a day to pass idly, they had assembled early to do battle at loo. There were several tables going, at one of them were Robert, Megatherium, Mahaleel Methuselah, Detective Meddle, and two prominent Israelites. Hugh saw at a glance that the play was terribly high. Heaps of gold, piles of notes, and cheques were beside every player. A heavy loo was on, and the players did not even notice Hugh. All the spectators were gathered around the table, and the excitement was intense. Hugh beckoned the landlord out of the room.

"Mr. Mamony," said he, "I have a favor to ask of you."

"It's granted, you bet, afore it's asked," was the smiling response.

"Well then, I want you to allow me to take a lady into the little room at the end. I want her to see the players."

Mamony hesitated.

"She won't split, will she," he asked in a rather uncertain way.

"My assurance ought to be sufficient," said Hugh.

"And she won't kick up a row, will she?" asked Mamony. "I allowed a girl in there once, and when she saw her fellow getting the worst of it she kicked up a pretty shine. So, said I to myself, you take my straight tip, I don't let women mouche around here. So help my cats, they're always at the bottom of mischief."

"I guarantee everything," said Hugh shortly.

"That's enough, as the horse said to the whip," said Mamony. "Here's the key."

The room indicated was situated next that in which play was going on. A small opening had been contrived to facilitate the obtaining of drinks, the waiter placing his tray on the ledge and receiving his money. This was now open, and anyone who stood in the room could see the play going on in the next apartment without being seen. Into this room Hugh conducted Linda. As a light would reveal them to persons in the next room, the apartment was in total darkness.

Linda hesitated when she discovered this and at first declined to enter. A little thought, however, convinced her that no harm was intended, and she stepped in and took her station at the aperture. Directly under her was the table at which Robert sat. Her heart beat fast as her eyes fell on him. There he sat amongst these hideous creatures, like a young king-god. What a contrast he was to the three Jews, whose cool calculating faces were so terrible to look upon, to Metallic Megatherium, whose countenance was that of a true gaol-bird, and to Detective Meddle, whose mean, treacherous face made every man who looked upon it feel a desire to kick him. Even in this terrible hour Linda felt a sort of pride in this splendid man she called her husband.

And it was for the company of these men, for the attractions of this room, that Robert had deserted his little home at Balaclava, with all its peaceful beauties and sweet home joys. It was for this that he had ruined her life and his own happiness. It was for this that he was risking his life and liberty. O! terrible folly. How could he do it? asked Linda.

But her attention soon became rivetted on the game. Although she did not understand it's mysteries she knew in a dim sort of way what was transpiring. She saw that the play was very deep. Over £400 was in the pool. Metallic Megatherium and Mahaleel Methuselah were winning heavily, the piles of

money before them being very large. Robert was fearfully excited, and had called for Moet and Chandon.

"I deal," said Metallic Megatherium with a low chuckle.

"No you don't," cried Mahaleel, "I do shentlemans."

And Mahaleel proceeded to operate. It was amusing to notice the manner in which the other players watched him. Not an eye was lifted off his hands until he had turned up the trump.

"S'help me," said Methuselah, "theresh no honesty in this world, you votch me has hif I vas a tief."

"You bet," ejaculated the other players.

"I lead," cried Megatherium, "Gentleman I always begins with a small card."

And he laid down the ace of trumps. A perfect roar succeeded, full of such horrible words that Linda closed her ears, and more, than ever regretted having ventured into such a scene. Megatherium joined the uproar, and none swore so loudly or so well. He had swept Robert's king, upon which he depended so greatly. The other players, too, had lost good trumps. Linda could see that Robert turned very pale, and sighed in a troubled manner. The hand was played out quickly, and resulted in Megatherium's taking the whole pool, £400, and the two players who had stood against him, Robert and one of the Israelites, being looted for that amount. Robert hastily drained a glass of champagne, and then counted £400 out of his pile into the pool, as also did his companion in misfortune. This left Robert's pile very small.

"I'll swear I will not stand on the king again" said Robert.

"Nor I on the jack and another," said the Israelite.

The cards were quickly shuffled by Megatherium. Linda hardly breathed with excitement. She hoped that Robert would win the £800, she prayed earnestly for it, even though she felt it was wrong to sympathise with him. If he won this he might be satisfied. Poor fool, as if a card-player could ever be satisfied!

Spades were trumps.

"I stand," said Robert, shutting his teeth closely, and speaking as if he had cast his fortune on the hazard of the die.

"So do I," said Mahaleel.

"And I," said Megatherium.

"And I," said Detective Meddle.

Robert gave a convulsive gasp. He knew well that none of these men would play for

such stakes without having splendid hands, particularly Detective Meddle whose play was a model of caution. Robert held the queen and ten. Having the lead, he was compelled to play the queen, and this was extinguished by Detective Meddle, who played the king; he then led the jack, and this took Robert's ten. Anxiously did he wait for Detective Meddle's next lead, as he hoped his ace of hearts might take a trick. Detective Meddle did lead a heart, but it was trumped by Mahaleel, which trump was beaten by Megatherium. The £800 was thus apportioned between Detective Meddle, who took two thirds, and Megatherium who took a third, Mahaleel and Robert being looted for £800 a piece. The spectators hardly breathed.

"Well, blow me, if this don't beat cock-fighting," said Mamony; "you are going the whole hog, gentlemen."

"Give me a cheque on the Bank of Victoria," said Robert, and he signed a cheque for £800. Mahaleel grunted and sweated, and swore, and protested that he never would play again, inveighing against his bad luck and casting out innuendoes about the play not being "square."

"None of your d—d nonsense," cried Megatherium with a perfect storm of curses; "shell out, you old skinflint; £1600 gentlemen in the pool."

Again Linda's heart beat with excitement. Oh! if Robert were to lose this, what would be the consequence?

Slowly and steadily the cards were dealt, and again Robert stood, and again he was looted, this time for £1600.

Robert rose from the table, and drained off three or four tumblers of brandy. He then returned to the table, resumed his seat, and gazed furiously at the players. It was his deal. "Put in the pool, if you please," said Metallic Megatherium.

"Yes, yes," cried Mahaleel; "put in de pool. S'help me, all my goot £800 gone."

Robert wrote a cheque amidst the most profound silence, and then put it on the table. Megatherium quietly threw it aside.

"Excuse me," said he, his face changing; "I don't take cheques for such an amount."

"What will you take then," cried Robert, his face flashing with anger.

"Gold or notes," was the provoking answer of the Megatherium.

"How can I get gold or notes at this hour?" cried Robert.

"I don't play otherwise," said Megatherium, coldly, even insultingly.

To this all the other players assented.

Robert sprang up, choking with rage.

"You mean, contemptible wretches," he cried; "you have won about £1000 from me to-night, and now you seize on this quibble to prevent my getting a chance to win back my money."

"Who cares?" said the Megatherium.

"You won't take my cheque?" said Robert.

"Not we," was the reply.

"Then you will take the money," said a firm, musical voice, and Marian Lee walked up the table, and deposited on it £1800 in notes. A murmur of surprise was heard at first, but it soon subsided, for the party were accustomed to the incursions of Marian.

"Nice fellows you are," said Marian, who was flushed and very much agitated, "to refuse Robert's cheque, when it is good for £5000 at least. You are a contemptible crew."

Linda saw all this, and still she held on, and neither screamed nor fainted. She saw this beautiful woman come round to Robert's side, and she noticed how their hands met, and the pressure that followed.

Fortune turned at once. Four players knocked in for the £1600, and Robert, who held a magnificent hand, looted two of them. This made the next pool £3200. All the other players in the room stopped and clustered around the table; even Detective Meddle, the coolest person in that room, began to be excited. Linda hardly knew whether to joy or sorrow, for it seemed to her as if the whole hopes of her life had vanished that night. Of what virtue was that parting kiss when he could so easily change. Yet this woman had saved Robert.

"See," said Hugh, who had taken up his stand by her side, "See how he treats her. She is more to him than you are."

Robert was the only player who ventured in for the £3200, and it was given up to him. Everyone sighed a sigh of relief when the single was announced. Mahaleel and Megatherium were furious.

"Deal away," said the former.

"Yes, gentlemen," said Robert, "deal as much as you please, but I play no more to-night. *Quid pro quo*."

"Not play any more to-night?" cried all, in a state of alarm.

"No," said Robert, scornfully, rising and taking Marian's arm, and there they left the disconsolate quintette, staring at one another.

"Vell, this is bad," said Mahaleel.

"Blow me if ever I seen the like." echoed Megatherium.

"Never mind," said Detective Meddle; "we'll have him again."

A sudden impulse seized Linda. She would try and take Robert home while he had so much money on him. A hope entered her heart that even now she could reclaim him. Rushing out of the room, she met Robert and Marian on the stairs.

"Robert!" cried Linda, in a deep, mournful voice; "dear Robert, I am here."

In the full flush of his success, Robert was startled. Marian at once comprehended the situation, and bit her lip with vexation.

"She or I," she said, in a low voice, in Robert's ear. He appeared to understand the hidden meaning of these words. Glancing around, his eye fell on Hugh.

"Hugh," said he, hurriedly, "take Linda home, will you. How could she come here? Go home, Linda; I will be with you in less than an hour. You will understand—"

He felt his maddening position so acutely that, unable to stand the scene, he motioned with his hand to Hugh, and disappeared, leaving Linda and Hugh together.

"And that is the way he treats you," cried Hugh. He could restrain himself no more. The time had come when he could open his battery. "Linda," he continued, in a low, agitated voice, "Linda, he has cast you off for another. Retaliate, Linda. Fly with me, and show the fool what he has lost. I am rich; I will make you happy as the day is long. I will be to you all that this man is not. O, Linda! remember my old love; it has never wavered, whilst this butterfly's has gone from you for ever. Fly with me, Linda."

She stood there, perfectly horrified. Now she appeared to understand why this man had brought her to witness this terrible scene, why he had been so assiduous. And to the tender mercies of this demon, her husband had committed her. The anguish, the shame, that supervened in her bosom, was so great that she fainted.

"Knew it would come to this," said Mamony, as he helped to restore Linda to consciousness. "I won't have women round again, not even for such gentlemen as you, Mr. Hanlon."

Linda no sooner opened her eyes than they fell on Hugh. She shuddered, and then burst into tears. Feeling, however, that her safety depended on her presence of mind, she rose, and walked down the stairs without as much



as acknowledging his presence. Having reached a respectable shop, she at once sent for a cab, and was driven straight to Harry's residence at St. Kilda, leaving Hugh standing on the steps of the hotel, in a state little short of madness. He saw now that all hopes of success were gone, unless he made a desperate *coup*.

Such was the story the poor girl poured out into Harry's sympathetic ear. He was horrified at the narration, and as it drew to a close, all his thoughts merged into intense pity for the young pair who had started so fairly, and ended so badly. All the strange, unholy thoughts that had at first struggled into his mind, were driven out, and the pure and holy affection he felt for Robert reigned supreme. Notwithstanding all that had taken place, he resolved to restrain himself. It would be best for this poor girl to return home.

It was a long time before he could persuade her to do this. But when he represented to her that it was her duty, and that she might be mistaken in thinking so hardly of Robert, she was at last persuaded to return. Not but that Harry was fully aware that, under other conditions, his conduct, and that of Linda, should be very different. Did they not love the misguided fellow so deeply, they would have cast him from them.

So the carriage was got ready, and Billy drove Linda home, while Harry remained in his house, feeling that self-satisfaction which all must feel when they have done their duty, and conquered a great temptation.

## PART XI.

### THE WORKING OF THE SPELL.

"Vanity of Vanities,  
All is vanity and vexation of spirit."

The reader who has accompanied us throughout cannot fail to have noticed the lapse of time that has taken place since the opening parts of this story, and he will have seen that, inferentially, we have pointed out the gradual working of that spell which had been cast around Robert, and although we have not explained to him the details that brought about the terrible change, yet he must have understood something of their working. In the years that have slipped by, how vast and important have been the changes. Robert, from a hardworking, honest young man, has become what even he dares not mention to himself. Hugh Hanlon has gathered money until he has become reputed as

wealthy. Harry Robertson has taken his seat in the parliament of the country, and although as yet he has not taken any prominent part in politics his voice has been heard and respectfully listened to. And William Dawson whom we met first wandering in the Yarra scrub, has under his protecting influence been changed into another being. The rapidity with which Willie's mind reverted back to the lessons of his youth and threw off the acquired habits of the that period when poverty gave him bad companions was wonderful. He had become handsome in body and brilliant in mind. To Harry he was a standing example of what can be done with those that the world contemptuously sets down as irreclaimable. The changes in the other characters of our story were also considerable. Metallic Megatherium had, after a great career on the turf, suffered severe reverses, the result of less care exercised in betting. Mahaleel Methuselah had sunk a large portion of his fortune in station property, and had made a number of bad loans, in his grasping anxiety to become a millionaire. Men of the Methuselah stamp who have risen from nothing can grasp a certain business pretty firmly, but when they get into the complications of large transactions they often fail to realise their position, and thus drift into such confusion, as to result in the loss of all their wealth. Advances upon mining shares had been very fatal to Methuselah. The enormous interest offered so dazzled his eyes and appealed to his greed of gain that he could not resist. These shares had fallen very rapidly, and the result was great loss. No one at this time knew in what position Mahaleel stood. They knew that he had become a more reckless gambler and betting-man, and that there was generally a feverish anxiety in his behavior that showed he was not the man he had been. Detective Meddle had become more and more involved in disreputable tactics; and his character was so notorious that people wondered how he was retained by the Government. But the very course of his life was such as to give him exceptionable means of searching out all the villainies in Melbourne, and the result was that he became an absolute necessity. Robert's position was one very difficult. Possessing the position of cashier of a bank, he was known in Melbourne as one of the most dashing men in the city. He was reputed to have quite a handsome income from mining alone, and was servilely

fawned upon by all the brokers and the betting men. His appearance on 'Change was always the signal for a great rush. His splendid personal bearing, his dashing ways, all told in his favor.

But the reader must not think that all this escaped the eyes of cautious Overdraw or cool, calculating Calculus. The latter had watched Robert with the eyes of a lynx, and continually instituted inquiries into his accounts. But it was in vain, not a figure was to be found wrong.

"I am sure he has done something with the money of the bank," Calculus would exclaim to Overdraw, in a baffled tone. "He must, he must, have worked upon our money, and then refunded it."

"I think you judge harshly," Overdraw would say. "I have no doubt the young man has been successful, and surely it is not our duty to interfere with him. We cannot dismiss a man for having made money, so long as we do not suffer."

In Overdraw, Robert had a constant friend. The old gentleman really loved his handsome clerk, and there was not a morning Robert entered the office but a cheery smile would suffuse his chief's face, even if it had been frowning before. So handsome, so pleasant was Robert's face, that few could look upon it without loving its possessor. Overdraw would sigh heavily when he would even imagine this dear boy being brought down to the level of Slabang.

"God forbid, God forbid," the old gentleman would say, and often when in his closet, for Mr. Overdraw was a strictly religious man, he would pour forth to God an earnest prayer that Robert might be saved from the temptations that had proved too strong for others. At times, indeed, he could not but feel timorous at the great change that had taken place in Robert, and fear he was not going the right road. Mr. Overdraw was so far removed from that circle which was devouring Robert, that he had little chance of ascertaining the real state of affairs. As for Robert's fellow clerks, they loved him so well that they would never think of, in any manner, revealing his doings.

It was strange the magnetism that Robert exercised over all with whom he came in contact. To know him appeared to be sufficient to cause one to love him. The hard, cruel betting and gambling men who mercilessly fleeced him, could not in their hearts but feel a sort of affection for him. The dashing men of Melbourne, the capitalists

and proprietors with whom he would come in contact, always hankered for his company. There is no doubt that this was one of the great causes of Robert's continuance in his downward course. The adulation he received, the universal affection felt for him, acted fatally on his mind, and led him to form a false estimate of his real standing. Too many friends are a great curse. Had Robert had time to turn round and think he might have stopped in his career. But so pestered was he with social attentions that he had not the leisure to do it. But the greatest curse of all was the false position which this entailed upon him. These wealthy men could not be kept company with without a great expenditure, and thus Robert was compelled to continue. When once we enter upon a fascinating course of life we find it difficult to go back. How could Robert at any moment in all these eventful years have thrown away all his high friends and become again the steady, plodding clerk? He could not have done it; it was impossible. And yet, poor fellow, he knew in his better moments that the deception could not be carried on. But such was the nature of his transactions that hope always fluttered on her white wings before him. Hope! She has been called by some writers an angel, but to our mind she deserves the title of demon. She it is who bears the mind on to anticipate events which cannot occur, and so deludes the worshipper at her shrine. She it is who may be likened to a terrible vampire that with the rustle of her wings puts the soul to sleep, while she drains the life blood of her victim. She it is who shuts our eyes to the fearful things that are to come, who closes our ears to the sounds of the great tempest that is gathering in our path. She it is who remains with us until the rain has descended, the winds have arisen, and our house built on her sands is swept away to perdition. Hope an angel? We think not.

It now remains for us to begin the revelation of how Robert was gradually drawn into the Maelstrom from which it seems impossible that he can be extricated. We last left him when he had staved off the evil day by borrowing £500 (less deductions) from Mahaleel Methuselah. We depicted the joy which was his when by the narrowest of chances he escaped disgrace and detection. We are perfectly aware that the circumstances were extraordinary, but in a story of real life one cannot go beyond facts however strange they may seem. Robert

had not well got over a month when he at once saw that he was hopelessly involved. His plainest course under the circumstances would have been to have renounced the debt, but by so doing he would have at once given Mahaleel Methuselah the opportunity to expose him, and he knew well what would have been the result did the transaction come to the ears of Calculus, who was no friend of his. The reader may wonder at this, but the fact was that Calculus was one of these soured disappointed men who hate anyone who appears to enjoy a greater share of the world's favor than themselves. Respectable and proper as Calculus appeared to the general and indiscriminating eye, he was not what he was thought to be. When he found that Robert was received in society far readier than he, when he found that he had supplanted him in the affection of Marian, for Calculus was one of those who were under the spell of that wonderful woman, he became furiously enraged, and bent his energies on Robert's destruction. Of this Robert was perfectly aware, and it made him adopt a guarded method of procedure that more than ever helped to precipitate him into difficulties. Indeed, Robert at first was terribly puzzled as to what he would do in order to meet his liabilities, which had in two months after the eventful scene in the bank, become large and pressing. He could not but reveal his difficulties to Hugh, who at once suggested what he called a bold stroke. He laid it down as a settled matter, that unless Robert would take fortune's fortress by a *coup de main*, all would be over. But what was this *coup de main*. Simply to borrow a large sum of Mahaleel Methuselah, and at once enter into speculation of three kinds, gambling, betting, and mining.

"You cannot fail to make a hit somehow, in either of the three," said Hugh, in his insinuating manner. "How did I raise myself out of the slough of despond into which I fell? Simply by one or two successful gambling *coups*. Then I went into betting, and there I made a success. Mining followed. Now, if I saw any means of escape out of your difficulties save such as I recommend, I would at once advise you to adopt another course, but I do not.

Poor Bobs! He felt the truth of Hugh's reasoning, and was compelled to adopt it. Mahaleel Methuselah was again resorted to. It was strange that this time he raised no objection, but freely gave. But in granting this extra loan, Mahaleel knew perfectly

well what he was about. We do not say that he was aware that Robert was in the hands of men who would compel him to go on to dishonesty, but we do say that he suspected it, and saw plainly that he stood a chance of getting back all his money, with compound interest. The miserable spirit of the man was such that he could not resist the prospect of great profit, no matter how that profit was to be achieved.

Robert had several times been invited to join in play, and at last, when he saw how Hugh won, he accepted the invitation. It is the easiest thing in the world to induce a man to play when his cupidity is so directly appealed to. Robert won for several nights, and this gave him an opportunity to invest money in bets and mining shares, the latter of which were pushed upon him by Hugh, who in this carefully studied his own interest. Robert made a profit on some of these ventures, which whetted his appetite more and more, and led him to believe that in time he would be able not only to clear off his liabilities, but to become independent of the bank. Already he had lost all that healthy interest in his work which is so essential. He had come to regard it as too dull and prosaic, and as a road to wealth which could only be pursued under difficulties, and result in the desired fortune when all interest in life had died away.

But the fatal destroyer of Robert's mind was gambling. Even in betting or mining it is not improbable he would have made money had it not been for the fatal influence of cards. We feel that to describe the influence of loo upon its victims is one of the most difficult tasks a writer can have. No other possible game or pursuit can so utterly engross the mind. Its chances are so great, its fluctuations so many, that truly it may be said to be irresistible. Its votary can never complain of *ennui*. Hugh himself was one of the slaves of this game, and he took care that Robert should participate. Hardly had the day's work at the bank been done when Hugh was sure to meet with Robert, and an adjournment was at once made to that select place where a certain number were always ready to indulge in the game. Gradually the influence became so powerful that Robert was never happy except when he was at the loo table. It is true that throughout he attended to his business assiduously because he knew perfectly well that Calculus was watching him. What relief then was it to fling all care away, and sit

down at the well appointed table, to quaff the flowing champagne, and play. A sort of happy lethargy came over Robert when he sat down to play; the atmosphere seemed laden, and appeared to weigh him down into his chair and confine him there as a prisoner. If he won, the irresistible desire grew to win still more, if he lost he was never satisfied until he rose a winner. His hours in the bank were utterly distasteful; for him Linda and his home had now no charm when put side by side with this engrossing pleasure. No delight seemed greater than that derivable from cards. When away from the scene of excitement his mind wandered back to it with fond desire. In this regard, too, it had an attraction, that is, the loo table was to him what the River Lethe was to the fabled inhabitants of Hades. When sitting at that fatal board, he forgot all his anxieties, his cares, his perplexities, his fears of the future in the chances and changes of the glorious game, before whose fascinations those of the loveliest women paled their ineffectual fires.

Up to this time Robert had resolutely kept from in any manner trenching upon the funds of the bank. He had not obtained the slightest clue to the mystery that surrounded the strange deficiency of £300, and had at last given it up as hopeless. Time after time when his losses were heavy he had been strongly urged to falsify his books and "borrow" from the bank. He saw many ways in which he could obtain as much as £1000 without in any manner exciting the suspicion of his employers. Placed as he was it was comparatively easy for him to manipulate the slips and accounts, and so lay his hand upon large sums for a time, but for a long while he held out against the temptation. But his moral feeling became every day less as the terrible infatuation grew upon him. It is the character of gambling of any kind that it weakens the moral perceptions and insensibly leads the mind to look upon things in a wrong light. Day by day it saps the foundations of our moral feelings, and renders us less careful as to *meum* and *tuum*. Robert felt this terrible sapping process, and struggled manfully against it. At times indeed, in his sober intervals he saw the gulf that was yawning beneath him, and attempted to flee from the certain consequences, but the moment he entered the society of his evil companions, all his resolves came to nothing. The evil of the whole thing was that hope

continually held before him the prospect of extrication out of his difficulties. A run of luck at the gaming table, the winning of a race by a certain horse, the rise in price of certain stock, was continually before him, and drew him on, step by step, to perdition. It is probable, indeed, that he could have escaped if he had confined himself to betting and mining, for careful attention would perhaps have led him to a *coup* that would have saved him. But as he became engrossed in loo, he grew more and more careless in his other transactions. When he ought to have been watching the tone of the market under the verandah, he was playing loo, overcome with that dreadful lethargy that seems to us like a disease. At times, indeed, Robert absolutely cared for nothing; he would have gone on his course if he saw certain destruction staring him in the face. All he cared for was to meet the necessities of the day; to-morrow would have to take care of itself. When he was enabled to meet all his engagements, he was supremely happy, and resolutely shut out the certainty that he would have next day to undergo the same process of borrowing to meet the demands made upon him. One consequence of indulgence in cards and betting, is that it blunts the best part of our nature, and makes us only susceptible to false feelings of honor. It was now of greater importance to Robert to meet his gambling debts than to pay those friends from whom he had borrowed. He religiously met the demands of Mahaleel Methuselah, Metallic Megatherium, and Detective Meddle. How these keen, cold, cruel men dogged the steps of the bright handsome fellow they were ruining, like vampires in the night; how they never ceased to appeal to his foibles, and especially that false sense of honor that they had implanted in him. To them he was so much per week, a large sum indeed, and not an inconsiderable portion of their income. As Mahaleel Methuselah became more involved he sought the card-table with increased assiduity, and this helped to confuse his affairs.

At last the climax came. Robert had borrowed until he could not hope to obtain any more money from his friends. He had now made the acquaintance of so many of that class known as the wealthy lower orders that for a time he had found no difficulty in getting them either to lend money or to back his bills. But this could not last, and things came to such a pass that Robert became almost



frenzied with his position. Each day he had to meet or renew bills, to find money for pressing claims, and often he went to bed at night without knowing where he could get the necessary money the next day. The pen can but feebly describe the terrible state of Robert's mind. It was one continual struggle to meet difficulties that were closing round him every day, like the fabled net of old. It is not a wonder that after the difficult and heart-breaking financing of the day he rushed into the gambling arena at night anxious to, if possible, make some money to meet the terrible demands of the next day. He was now well known in gambling circles as a brilliant and desirable player, and his attentions were not exclusively devoted to the Metallic Megatherium circles, he often played with men who were presumed to be respectable, held a very high position in Melbourne, and were old enough to be his father. These men are wealthy, and the loss of a thousand or two is nothing to them. They sit down to loo as an amusement, and never think that what is fun to them is death to the smaller fry who have the privilege (?) of playing with them. Perhaps they are to blame—perhaps not. As long as they play with men of their own calibre no great harm is done, except the bad example given to the other portion of the community, but when they allow men inferior to themselves in wealth to play with them they hurt grievously those men.

Robert found out one eventful day that unless he took some decided steps the beginning of the end was near. The false system of credit which he had established, and which now involved him in a liability that amounted to thousands, would break down the moment he was unable to meet his bills, and then would follow inevitable exposure and disgrace, nay, he was not certain but that he had already committed himself so far as to place himself within the clutches of the law. His dealings with certain friends and wealthy men were of such a character that doubts of this kind arose in his mind. But what, in his present unhealthy state of mind, powerfully influenced him, was the feeling that he could not stand the disgrace and ignominy that would follow. He could not bear to think that his enemies would triumph over him, that he could not show his face again amongst those men whom he now regarded as his friends. His downfall would be so great and lamentable that his heart died within him as he thought of it.

It was two o'clock when Robert stood behind the counter of the Collusive Bank, writhing in agony as message after message came in to the effect that unless by three o'clock a certain amount would be deposited in the bank where he kept his account, his cheques and bills, amounting to thousands, would be dishonored. At last came a final note from the manager to the effect that the messenger from the bank which held the bills was waiting for an answer, and that no delay could be allowed. Robert's heart beat fast, his face paled and flushed, his head grew giddy. At that moment the opportunity was presented to him of by one bold stroke annihilating all his troubles for a time. A dash of his pen would do it. He might be successful that night, the Extended Hustler's or Golden Fleece he held might double their value next day, the horse he had betted on so heavily might win, and then he could repay all. Fatal reasoning! Better it would have been for Robert to trust to the mercy of his friends than to at once by a stroke of his pen, place himself within the pale of the criminal law. But again that disease that now was sapping his mind rapidly was too powerful, and destroyed all the other forces of his mind. Precisely those influences which had made him rush to Mahaleel Methuselah to get rid of his present difficulties, were now paramount. He saw before him the means to get free for a time, to ease himself from the dreadful load that was upon his soul. Freedom for the moment was of more importance than the future. He would pay all off, and rush from the bank a free man, to plunge into the only thing that now could give him pleasure.

Had there been an opportunity to think, there is no doubt that Robert would have triumphed over the temptation, but the emergency was so pressing, the opportunity to escape so great, the delusions of hope so perfect, that after a struggle of a few minutes he gave way, and passed the fatal bound. The bills were met, Robert's credit was saved, and he walked out of the bank that day to meet his friends in Collins-street as usual, to be chaffed about his good luck, and invited to different parties. But he had created a terrible Nemesis that would dog his steps to the death, and night or day follow him like a Frankenstein. He felt that, notwithstanding the feelings of relief he experienced, he had drawn a line between himself and the world, He shuddered as he thought of the change

that would take place in those men who now crowded round him if they could only guess that he was a felon; that any unforeseen circumstances might at once rob him of his position and hurl him after Slabang and those other unfortunates whose downward career he had watched. At that very moment the public mind was agitated with the trial of a man who had held a position even higher than Robert's. The reader may wonder how a man in his senses could act as Robert did in the face of such a fact, but it shows little knowledge of human nature, or of the spell which gambling and speculation, throws over their victims, to fancy that men can be deterred from evil deeds by a present example of the results. Hope flatters them with the idea that although these persons have lost the stakes, they will be more successful. Such was the terrible madness and infatuation that had taken hold of Robert that he appeared to be careless of any consequences so long as he escaped the present difficulty. Of the terrible nature of what he had done Robert was well aware. No man could be more sensible to its consequences, no man could hate himself more intensely for his actions than Robert.

It was this very self-hatred that threw him into the excesses which followed. He endeavored to drown the recollection, and thus succeeded in destroying the small remains of conscience left to him.

Let the young reader who may be circumstanced as Robert was, reflect upon what we have feebly shadowed forth, and if he has dipped a little into the vortex, let him ask himself if the picture we have presented is not one true to life, if the sensations we have endeavored to analyse are not like his own. Let him be warned in time. If he has already tasted a little of the effects of the fatal spell, let him be sure that, as he goes on, precisely the same will occur to him as did to Robert, and others who have gone the road to ruin.

On the afternoon of that very day when Robert had crossed the Rubicon, Metallic Megatherium, Hugh Hanlon, Mahaleel Methuselah, and Detective Meddlesat in a little parlor of the Loo Hotel, discussing. There was a gloomy look upon the faces of the quartette, a look which made their faces bear their true expression.

"I can't stand this much longer," said Mahaleel, "Ven I thought everything was square in that mortgage, it turns out that I'm done. And shentlemens, it's my opinion you're on the wrong tack about this horse

business. Deceiver's a good horse, and is bound to win the cup if his owner, that tammed Scrupell, likes."

"But we have fixed that all right," replied Megatherium; "didn't he say, in the presence of the whole crowd of us, that he'd take £15,000 to sell the race, and haven't we agreed to give him what he asks?"

"I tell you what," said Metallic Megatherium, with an ugly look, "if Scrupell plays us foul, by — I'd kill him as soon as I'd look at him. I have bet so heavily against Deceiver that if he came afore the judge first, I'd have to go before another judge afterwards. I tell you I won't stand it. He daren't do it."

"Vell, that's all fine," replied Mahaleel, with a shrug, "but vot did he do last year— declared to win with Slanty, and his horse Moucher came in first. There's no honeshty in the worldt."

"But he can't get £15,000 against his loss," cried Megatherium.

"Can't he?" said Hugh, "why I could go to-morrow and get £40,000. It's a ticklish game, gentleman; the ring is laying heavily against this horse in the faith that he'll not run to win, and the public will hear of nothing except him. Supposing old Scrupell gets his horse bet against more than fifteen thou., do you think he'll consider us?"

"Well there's one thing certain," said Detective Meddle; "we wouldn't be very particular either."

"Look here," cried Metallic Megatherium, "don't you talk any more about this. By — if that horse wins I wouldn't give sixpence for Scrupell's life. Why he'd ruin the whole talent. He daren't do it, that's all."

And Megatherium gave vent to such a string of blasphemies that even his hearers felt horrified, and it took a good deal to horrify them.

"Thursday decides the whole affair," said Detective Meddle, "and then it'll be seen whether you are men or mice."

"I wish to Got I'd a never touched horses or cards," cried Mahaleel in a sort of agony, "I have lost money every way since I took it up. Whersh all the money I had a few years ago. Gone in d—— stations and scrip and mortgages, and loans, and I'm left with bits of paper not worth burning. I'm a ruint, I am."

"Shut up, you old hypocrite," said Hugh, "arn't you coining money. How much have you made out of that poor fool, Robert?"

"Nothin'! nothin'!" cried Mahaleel, "he'll be the ruin of me."

"O! don't be frightened," said Hugh with a sneer, "he's made another rise it seems to-day, for all his bills have been paid and he's got plenty of money."

There was a horrible laugh all round.

"Made a rise," said Mahaleel.

"I can guess where it comes from," said Detective Meddle, "and will tell old Calculus when I talk with him."

"You are delaying a long time over that talk," said Hugh shortly, "Haven't I told you that it is time his affair was finished. I tell you it must be done."

"O! it will soon be done," said the detective with a frown, "and other people's too."

As he said this he fixed his green eyes on Hugh, who quailed and changed color. The mysterious feeling of awe which at times over-mastered him when in the presence of this man, again took possession of Hugh. An indefinable dread permeated his mind. And yet what had he to fear?

"I don't know what you mean," he said quietly.

"Vell, vell," said Mahaleel, "I don't care to see him go down for another two, tree months, he's a jolly fellow, and brings the monish in well."

"Genelmen," said Megatherium, "I'm goin' to see Scrupell. I won't let him get away from me until that race is over. An' I'll go and see if I can't get hold of the boy that's to ride Deceiver, it'll never do to have only one string to our bow."

"You don't stand much show to nobble the horse," said Hugh; "old Scrupell sleeps in the manger or on the horse's back, I don't know which."

"O! I've done it afore," said Megatherium, with a coarse laugh, and he walked out.

"Won't he topple down if Deceiver's allowed to win," said Detective Meddle.

"My dear friend don't talk like that," cried Mahaleel, "You'll kill me; I'm so nervous. O! I wish the Cup was over, an' so help me I'd give up betting."

"Until next time," laughed the rest of the party.

Hugh and Detective Meddle remained talking for some time after the rest had gone. Could Robert have heard their conversation he would have been ready to die with fear.

It was on that fateful night that Robert played and won the £3200, and that poor Linda was witness to his infidelity. Thick and fast the clouds were gathering, and the crisis was at hand. That evening Calculus and Detective Meddle had been seen talking

together. Those who looked on nodded their head and said, "What's in the wind now? Detective Meddle does not talk to bank inspectors for nothing."

And he did not talk to them for nothing. That evening also, he had spent some time with other members of the detective force. That consultation was about a MURDER. About these consultations Hugh knew nothing. Detective Meddle carried out consistently his character for duplicity.

When Robert had insulted Harry and he returned back to the gay rooms of the café, it seemed to him as if he could live no longer. Event after event had taken place with such lightning rapidity, burden after burden had fallen upon him so furiously and fast he really appeared incapable of bearing them. He felt indeed, that his brain was going wrong; that a little more and he would become insane.

What a despicable creature he appeared to himself. He had destroyed the happiness of the woman who loved him so devoutly, he had changed his only friend into an enemy; he had robbed his employers and betrayed his friends. What more could he do? He surely must be mad. What would he do? It seemed to him at that moment that the only course open to him was to commit self-destruction. Would it not be pleasant after all to leave this sickening burden of trouble behind and plunge into that unseen where the wicked cease from troubling and the weary are at rest? Surely no place of torment was equal to this. How would he rid himself of this dreadful life, by cord, knife, pistol, or the cold waters of the Yarra, which had ended the career of so many who had erred like himself?

Marian sat beside him and thoroughly understood his feelings. Her love for him had grown stronger than ever, and it seemed to her now that a terrible judgment had come upon her. How many a man she had ruined, and now the only being she truly loved was about to be snatched from her. She felt as if her love was destined to become fatal to its object, as if fate had decreed that that was to be her punishment. She had done all she could to save Robert, but all her efforts appeared vain. Already, in the effort, all her little fortune had vanished, and she knew that the result would be that if the Melbourne Cup did not eventuate to suit her, she would be poor as ever. The money that she had advanced that night to Robert had not really been her own.

In such an hour, there came back to this woman the recollections of her youth, and she traced her career with intense agony.

"Dear Robert," said she, "this money you have won to-night will do something towards getting you out of your difficulties."

Robert shuddered.

"Impossible," he replied; "it is but a mere trifle compared to what I have to meet. Marian, I feel as if I could destroy myself."

How could he meet his injured wife, his insulted friend?

"There is only one hope," said Marian, mournfully, "only one hope. If Scrupell will not play false, then we will all retrieve our fortunes."

True, there was that hope. Robert breathed again, and rays of hope began to penetrate his darkened soul.

They were talking together mournfully when several fast young gentlemen entered. They were young fellows with plenty of means, whose existence was passed in what they called pleasure and excitement. The moment they caught sight of Robert they at once seized upon him, and would take no refusal, he must go the club, where a great card party was to be held.

"Just looking for you," said Fastgoer, taking Robert's arm; "old Sheepskins and several other fogies are there, and we can easily win a pot from them."

Again deceitful hope whispered in Robert's ear. These men were not good players, and he might win a thousand or two. He would not play again that night with the "talent," but this was a different thing; so he went. Marian vainly tried to stop him, and perceived with poignant regret that even she had lost that power over him. So she had to return to St. Kilda, wondering amidst her fears and regrets who was the handsome boy that was in Harry's company that night. If only she knew!

Robert Wilton rose from the card table about four o'clock that morning a loser of all the money he had won, and indebted to several of the players, the only consolation given to him by old Sheepskins being that it was a "precaurious game."

Deceiver was now the only link that kept back Robert from a death by his own hand.

## PART XII.

### INTO THE SILENT LAND.

Into the Silent Land,  
Ah! who shall lead us thither;  
Clouds on the evening sky more darkly gather,  
And shattered wrecks lie thicker on the strand;  
Who leads us with a gentle hand,  
Thither, O Thither,  
Into the Silent Land!

Into the Silent Land,  
To you, ye boundless regions  
Of all perfection, tender morning visions  
Of beauteous souls, the Future's pledge and bond,  
Who in Life's battle firm doth stand,  
Shall bear hope's tender blossoms  
Into the Silent Land!

Oh Land! Oh Land!  
For all the broken hearted,  
The mildest herald by our fate allotted,  
Beckons, and with inverted torch doth stand,  
To lead us with a gentle hand  
Into the Land of the Great Departed,  
Into the Silent Land!

*From the German of Salis.*

In the busy city, surrounded by multitudes of men, with the hum of traffic in our ears, with the thoughts of gain or pleasure in our minds, in the heat and bustle of life, reflection is dead, and we think only of the ephemera that constitute our outward life; but when evening falls, the din dies, and we retire to our homes, the sudden quietude begets a graver frame of mind, and leads us to think of matters beyond the mere passing shadows of existence. So in life. When we have played our parts in the garish theatre and retire divested of the tinsel that we have worn for the brief period in which we assumed a part, when the music has ceased and the lights have been extinguished, the whole unreality is vividly presented to the soul, and there comes a flood of ideas and reflections that entirely changes the current of our thoughts. Then we see the opportunities we have lost, the mistakes we have committed, the follies that have led us astray, and the wearied soul trembling on the verge of an Awful Eternity, cries out in despair—"Vanity of vanities, all is vanity and vexation of spirit!"

William Slabang lay in the Hospital dying. He knew now that the time of his dismissal was at hand, and that ere long he would have to stand before a Tribunal to whom all his past life was known, a naked soul. In the days of his prosperity he had doubted the existence of that Tribunal, of a World to come; in the time of his darkness and despair he had disbelieved there was a God of mercy and justice, else he would not have suffered so heavily; but now the hour of death came the soul shrank at the fearful chasm it was about to leap. And experiencing



his restored reason he now saw plainly that all his misery had been caused by himself. And here, again, he felt a ray of hope permeate his soul. He had sinned heavily in this world and he had been heavily punished in this world. Was the doctrine true that we are punished here for the evil we have done? Surely after the anguish he had experienced in this wretched world there was not a hell awaiting him in the next? Poor soul!

The fever of life had died out and reason once more had resumed her sway. His life for years had been one terrible excitement since he first assumed the privilege of manhood. How it had grown upon him gradually as he saw himself surrounded by new friends daily, entering into pleasures and speculations of which he had fondly dreamed, and was now over elated to find himself realising. Then came the trouble and turmoil of his fall, followed by the effort to drown in drink and dissipation the stings and reproaches of his conscience, the terrible disappointment of his life. During that awful time reason on several occasions had returned, but only to be drowned by the mad indulgence in the Lethe of intoxicating liquor. It was like a fearful dream, too horrible to be true.

Was it only a dream, and had he now awoke to find himself again setting out on the journey of life, young, handsome, gay, beloved! Oh! no, no, no; there was evidence around that the dream had been too terribly true. As he lay there in the still night he had every reason to know it was not a dream.

The bare white walls looked down upon a scene such as must bring home to the most hardened the stern realities and sufferings of life. In the dim light of the half turned on gas was to be seen bed after bed, on which lay some poor wretch bandaged and swathed, his features pinched with pain. No happy faces were there; no cheerful voices. From the white bedclothes rose pale faces, looking around wearily. From afar came the din of the city, the music of the bands, the hum of many voices and the beat of many feet. Lying there in that dreary solitude, ah! how many a one thought of the gay hours he had spent in places not far distant, and now he lay here forgotten by the butterflies of pleasure, who were just as intent on their amusements as if he had never existed. Gone were the gay companions, vanished the illusory phantoms of an unhealthy existence; and now life stood out bare and cold.

As Slabang lay there the recollections of

the past began to throng upon him, the many memories that return to the mind after being discarded for years. He saw what a bright life his would be now had he not given way to the sirens of pleasure that had lured him to destruction. Had he kept on the steady life he had been leading, he would now hold a high position in the Collusive Bank, would have had a neat residence in the suburbs, a loving wife, sweet little children. His life would pass away in a dream of gentle pleasure. O! fatal woman, fatal wine-cup, that had allured him from the peaceful paths of life. And now, what was he? A thing for even the lowest to despise. Opportunity had been his, but he had let it slip, and now it would come no more. The rope had been thrown to him when struggling in the water of life, and he had contemptuously flung it aside.

How in the still hours of the night, unbroken save by an occasional groan from the shrouded sufferers, his companions, his soul was racked and tortured with the memory of the past and the to come. How earnestly he wished for some one to be near him to console him with the unutterably precious pearl, love, to whisper in his ear the words of hope, of sympathy, the sympathy for which his soul craved with an unappeasable hunger. How the tears rolled down his cheeks as he thought that he was alone in the world without a soul to care for him, except these cold heartless attendants, who treated him like a dog. It is singular how unsympathetic and hard hospital attendants are. They treat suffering as if it were nothing; the milk of human kindness finds no place in their hearts. Slabang thought how different it would have been if he had led a regular life; he would have had one at least who would have cared for him, loved him, tended him to the last, and wept when he was dead.

And now for the first time dark thoughts came into his mind, thoughts full of the malice of human evil. Strange to say, it was the vision of a sweet face that darkened his soul. Like a face seen in dissolving views this rose before him, first gentle and so very beautiful, then tinged with care, and lastly changed so that the first bore little resemblance to the last vision. Ah! if Hugh had not come between them how beautiful their life might have been. But his last act would be to revenge the girl he had so fondly loved.

Thursday afternoon came. He knew it by the unusual commotion in the city, the sound of many vehicles as they hurried to Fleming-

ton to witness the great race of the year, the Melbourne Cup. But a few years ago he remembered so well how he had been the gayest of the gay "on the road," driving his pair with some fair one by his side, the admired of many. The vision of that scene came to him with all the strength of a returned memory the crowds on the hill, the gay lawn, the flat covered with people, the horses drawn out in long array, the sweep past the grand stand, the cries of the assembled multitude as the horses passed the abbatoirs and began to extend themselves, the maddening excitement as they rushed up the straight neck to neck, and the final burst of cheering as the winner flashed by the judge's box. Wearied with imagining the scene he closed his eyes and fell into a deep sleep. He did not awake until the sound of the returning vehicles disturbed the air, the rush and scurry of a thousand hoofs and a thousand wheels, the great din of the return from the races. But he took little interest in anything now. He felt himself sinking, his breath was growing weaker, and he felt unable to move. It seemed as if a lethargy had come over him which rendered him incapable of thinking or feeling. A lethargy? It was death.

As in a dream he heard the revelry of the city, now full of life and light, but the hum came to him only like the lullaby of a mother putting her babe to sleep. It was all fading from him; he felt his grasp on the rock of life loosening and the waves of the ocean of death bearing him away—

"Thither, O thither,  
Into the Silent Land."

Two persons stood at his bedside, and he heard their conversation as if he heard it not.

"He has been going all day," said a voice he knew to be the surgeon's, "I wonder he has lived so long, for I never saw such a wreck. He must die to-night."

"How is it his deposition was not taken?" asked the other in a voice so full of sympathy that it woke the slumbering feelings of the dying. O! the pleasure that fills the departing soul when a voice of sympathy is heard. He knew the voice, too; it was the full, deep tones of Harry Robertson. Slabang opened his eyes and looked up into the handsome, pitying face that was gazing into his. Oh, this was joy unspeakable! A friend had at last come—one who would grasp his hand as he passed into the dark river. The poor dying creature held out his hand, and Harry grasped it.

"I am dying, Harry," said he, so faintly that his auditors could hardly hear him. "I would like to tell you all I know about Bella."

"Send for a magistrate at once," said Harry, and one of the warders rushed away.

During his absence Harry sat by the bedside and spoke to Slabang words full of the deepest meaning. The poor fellow listened as in a dream, but he grasped Harry's hand with all the strength he had left, and his eyes never left Harry's. He wished his last look to be into the eyes of one who felt for him, who understood his sufferings.

The magistrate came, and having arranged everything, Slabang proceeded with his narrative, which was taken down in legal phraseology, but we give it in his own language:—

"You know, Harry, that I loved Bella Dawson. For a time I thought to wrong her, as I did not contemplate asking her to be my wife, our worldly positions being so different. But I discovered that she was too virtuous to listen to my proposals, and although I attempted to forget her I found that my heart was hers irrevocably. Her gentle, modest ways, her true womanliness, and her irreproachable purity, enchained my soul to such a degree that after vainly trying to dissociate myself from her I was compelled to accept my fate, and resolved to marry Bella. But I had delayed too long. While I was hesitating, that wretch Hugh Hanlon met her, and the poor girl surrendered herself heart and soul to him. I never saw such an infatuation. She loved him with all her heart and all her soul. O, that such a love had been mine! O, that she had loved me as she did him! it would have saved me and rescued me out of the abyss into which I was just then falling. It was the blow I sustained when I discovered I was not loved by the only one for whom I cared, and that she loved another, which destroyed me. I was maddened and desperate. You know what followed, Harry. When I had fallen to the lowest I again found my darling, but ah! how changed. Poor thing, her story was a sad one. Take down my words carefully, for I desire to remove a blot from the memory of one who has been traduced. Harry, poor Bella was married to Hugh Hanlon. He tried, as I did, to undermine her virtue, but found it too strong for even his fascinations, and you know what they were. How she could have withstood one she loved so I do not understand; but he married her, beyond the

slightest doubt—I saw the certificate myself. They were married under their own names at St. John's Church; you will find the registry of it there. Hugh paid attention to her for some time, but soon became tired of the poor thing, and deserted her. He made many efforts to get her out the country, for he was smitten with Linda, and at that time he thought there was a chance that she would listen to him. It was a little before his fall. Mad with the prospect of marrying the woman he loved, he took every means to get rid of the girl he had espoused simply to satisfy his own terrible passions. The poor creature had lost everything, and wandered about the streets of Melbourne, earning a little now and then by needlework. But—listen to me, Harry—she was ever the same pure woman. Rags, hunger, disgrace were hers, but she never lost that glorious attribute of woman. I, degraded as I was, respected her, but I had no means wherewith to relieve her. I advised her to bring an action against Hugh, but she loved him still so strongly that she would not hear of disgracing him, arguing that at such a critical time, she would be his ruin if she did as I advised. And so she went on her way, dear girl, patient and uncomplaining. But the time came when she heard that Hugh was going to be married—it was when Bob and Linda had had a tiff, you know they frequently quarrelled. Then Hugh sought Bella, and tried to get the certificate from her, but he failed. I never saw a man so terribly angry; he seemed to me like an incarnate demon. He left her, threatening that he would kill her if she did not give up the token of her marriage. I never saw her again, but shortly after, her dead body was found in the Yarra scrub. You start. I feel certain that Bella was killed by that monster, and that he tore the certificate from her."

The dying man now rose up, and his features assumed great animation, life shot into his eyes, and a dreadful expression came into his face that distorted it hideously.

"Mark me," said he, hurriedly, "mark me, Hugh Hanlon was the murderer of Bella, and, Harry, if there is a spark of manhood in you, never stay your hand till he stands upon the gallows. Hang him, hang him, torture him, kill him—" here weakness again came over the man. "O that I could live to see him hanged! It would atone for all that I have suffered. I would revel in the scene. But his fate soon overtook him. All that he had done so much to compass was

lost, and he fell, he fell, lower than I. But he has risen again, risen only to fall into the abyss of hell, of hell."

Slabang fell back upon the pillow, his face terribly distorted, his features working in the last death struggle.

"Sign, sign," said Harry, hurriedly, fearing he would die before the important document could be sealed. But with a last supreme effort, Slabang took the pen and signed his name. Then he lay back, and the shadow of death fell heavily upon him. The sudden gust of human passion died away, and the cold, pale face assumed the dreamy look it wore when Harry entered.

Still he murmured, "Punish him, Harry, revenge her death."

"I will," said Harry, "I will. But poor Will, think of the Land whither you are going, and pray to that Saviour who died for us."

"Yes, yes," faintly murmured the dying man, "I have repented in the dust, I have prayed to Him, but will he hear one who has given his best to the world and the devil, and has only the dregs left for his Redeemer? I remember the—old—hymn—

Seeking me thy worn feet hasted,  
Seeking me thy soul death tasted,  
Lord, shall all these toils be wasted."

Here his voice failed, but still he continued to murmur snatches of the glorious *Dies Irae*, a hymn befitting a parting soul. Only for a few moments, then came a strange stillness, and the sinning, suffering soul departed to meet Him who has said that his mercy is boundless and His love eternal.

"Into the Silent Land."

Harry stood silent over all that remained of the once gay, handsome William Slabang, and the moisture came into his eyes when he thought of the lost life which had terminated there. The attendants in the meantime proceeded to close the dead man's eyes and perform those other offices which they looked upon as simply matters of business. Harry turned away. It was too much for his kind, susceptible heart.

There was a hurried step upon the stairs, the door opened, and Willy Dawson walked up to Harry, his face betraying unusual excitement. One glance showed him what had taken place, and he looked down upon the dead face with a feeling of awe.

"Mr. Robertson," said Willy, hurriedly, "there is not a moment to lose. Mrs. Wilton is waiting for you at St. Kilda. Something dreadful has happened, for she is more like a ghost than a living person. When she found

you were out she fainted, and I thought she would have died before I could get her round. I managed to soothe her a bit by telling her I would go for you, and bring you home in a few minutes. She told me if ever you loved Robert to come to her or she would commit suicide. O! Mr. Robertson come to the poor girl."

Harry started and turned pale. The end had come, he knew. Was Robert in gaol? The thought was madness. All the passionate affection he had felt for the dear boy, the friend of his youth returned, and he felt as if he could fly to his rescue, and yet there came the remembrance of what Robert had done to him, and it acted as a sort of a stop. Still he could not refuse to see the poor helpless creature who loved the foolish boy as fondly as he did. She ought not to suffer.

"The carriage is at the hospital gates," said Willy, taking Harry's hand.

"Come then," said Harry, in a state of excitement; "I will see Linda. See the best done for this poor departed one," he continued to the warder, "and I will defray all expenses."

And Harry followed Willy down to the carriage, hardly knowing all the time what he did, his mind full of confused ideas about the *dénouement*.

### PART XIII.

#### DECEIVER.

"Clouds in the evening sky more darkly gather,  
And shattered wrecks lie thicker on the strand."

That fateful Wednesday night Robert never went home. Thursday was the day of the Melbourne Cup, which was to make a man of him or ruin him for ever. If Deceiver were to come before the judge's eye first, he would be lost—irretrievably lost—without the slightest hope of ever getting out of the Slough of Despond into which he had plunged; but if the negotiations of Metallic Megatherium, Mahaleel Methuselah, Detective Meddle, and their companions were successful, and Mr. Scrupell had in real truth sold Deceiver, then hope was once more his, and he would at once obtain such a sum as would enable him to pay back the money he had taken from the bank, settle with all his creditors, and resume his former position. Then, he swore to himself, he would give up that unhallowed pursuit which had brought him to this pass; would fling off the fascinating siren who had, for mad, unholy love it is true, helped to make him what he was, and be faithful to his own

true, loving wife. But would that wife forgive him? And what about the dear friend whom he had, in his moments of mad frenzy, so terribly affronted? Sitting in the grey morning light, in the midst of his ghastly comrades, the remembrance of the handsome, kindly face he had loved so well when they were boys together, came back to Robert, like an avenging Nemesis. O! what at that moment would he not have given to have Harry by his side, to clasp the dear fellow's hand and hear his words of love and forgiveness!

But it would come all right. Deceiver had been bought; there was no doubt of that, and he would win.

O! what joy would be his when he would obtain the money and pay it into the bank; when he would become a free man instead of a felon. But what if the embezzlement would be discovered that day;—if Fate, in the person of Calculus, stopped the way? It was agony to think that he would have to wait until Monday for the money, unless he could persuade one of the men with whom he had bet to give him enough to cover his embezzlement, and he felt sure the genial fellow would.

But this anguish of suspense was unendurable. Oh! that it were all over.

Day was now dawning and revealed the anxious faces of the party gathered around a little table at the great racing hotel. The faces wore a ghostly look; not one of the party had been to bed; they had remained betting and gambling all night. Bourke-street, in front of the hotel, had been filled with a swaying crowd of betting men and the gulled public. It was the last hour of the harvest and the fields were ripe, the laborers plentiful. The great men had remained within, and their emissaries were out in all directions making bets in order to square the books. It cannot be said, that so far as the representatives of the betting ring here assembled were concerned, matters looked particularly bright. A scowl rested on all their faces.

"Why didn't you get Scrupell to put his name to paper?" said Hugh Hanlon uneasily.

"Get him to put his name to paper," cried Metallic Megatherium with a string of terrible oaths; "what — rot you talk, do you think Scrupell's a — fool to go and commit himself? Would you? I tell you there is not the slightest bit of fear. We bet him £15,000 to nothing, and I defy him to get more than that by the stakes and



the bets he will make. How can he go against his own interest?"

"You forget," said Detective Meddle, "that Scrupell hates the ring as he does the devil, and would think nothing of throwing us over."

"Shentlemens, shentlemens," cried Mahaleel Methuselah gulping down half a tumbler of brandy, "for Got's sake don't talk like that, sure you wouldn't have me a ruine, a ruine. O Got! if Deceiver comes in first——"

Here Methuselah went through a pantomime which set off the others into fits of laughter. This fairly raised the ire of the Hebrew, and he stood up choking with rage and livid with passion.

"Sit down, old boy," said Detective Meddle with a sneer. "Time enough to get out of temper when the horses pass the judge."

"Mein Got," cried Methuselah, "if anyone told me Deceiver had broken his neck I would give him a thousand pounds and kiss him."

"No doubt the thousand would be acceptable enough," said Hugh with a laugh, "but the kiss would hardly be cared for."

"Where shall we go, what shall we do?" said Metallic Megatherium, "until the market opens again; I am sick of this; I can't play; I can't drink any more."

"For my part I'll have to go to the bank," said Robert.

"And I'll have to go to the detective office," said Detective Meddle. "I have to write up several most important cases—one a very extraordinary one."

"What is it?" asked Robert, with a shudder.

"The case of a fellow who tried to pass a cheque written in two different inks," replied the detective, fixing his eyes on Mahaleel Methuselah—"one, the ordinary ink, the other an ink that became illegible after a few hours."

"Mein Got," cried Methuselah with a sort of scream.

"Well," said Hugh, "we meet here at exactly a quarter-past twelve."

"I'm off to see Scrupell again," said Metallic Megatherium.

"Do," said Detective Meddle; "mind you he took very long odds about Deceiver before the weights were out, and I know there's a good £50,000 bet against Deceiver on the books of the ring."

"What about this rumor that Deceiver did the distance 'weights up' in 3.36?" asked Robert.

"Not a bit of truth in it," cried Metallic Megatherium, in the emphatic way of those who desire to convince themselves. "All bunkum and blow."

"I hope so," said Robert, as the strange-looking crowd separated on the steps.

The beautiful sun was rising in the clear morning sky when the dissipated crowd took their way as fancy led. One thing they were confident of, that the Melbourne Cup of that year would have the finest weather ever known. This troubled the soul of Mahaleel Methuselah, for he knew well enough that a dry course was favorable to Deceiver. Had the course been wet and sloppy, then he knew Deceiver would not stand so good a show, as such horses as Heavihoof, Stamper, and others could hold their own with him. Still it was a dreadful reflection for these men to think that even a rumor existed to the effect that Deceiver had made the distance at a trial gallop, weights up, in less time than was ever taken to do the Melbourne Cup.

Robert wandered away by himself, thinking—thinking of what he had done, and revolving in his mind the possibilities of his escaping being ruined. Doubts of Mr. Scrupell entered his mind. He knew that Scrupell had suffered terribly through the ring. Once he had been a man of fortune, and like many men who have risen, he thought to add horse-racing to his amusements. A costly amusement he had found it to be indeed. One year, when he had an immense stake pending on the Melbourne Cup, his jockey had been tampered with by Metallic Megatherium—as Hugh had recounted in an earlier part of this work. That memorable coup of Megatherium had ruined Scrupell, and made him solely dependent upon racing. This year, no matter how affairs went, he would retrieve his losses and succeed in restoring his fortune. It was true that he could perhaps make a larger amount by selling Deceiver to the bookmakers, but there was a doubt as to whether he would not prefer to be revenged at the loss of a few thousands.

What was the use of troubling his mind with these matters? asked Robert as he walked along the streets, now being fast peopled by early risers, such as market folks and the like. A very different class of persons frequent the streets at different times of the day. In the morning the movers in the street have an unwashed appearance; there is a class of working people and there is a class of loafers abroad just after sunrise.

It is a strange mingling of two classes of society, one estimable, the other a curse. Amongst which did the unfortunate youth class himself? Undoubtedly amongst the latter. He could not but regard himself as of all men the most accursed and unworthy. But if fate were to ordain that Deceiver would not win the Melbourne Cup he would once more assume the position he had held.

But what about Calculus? Was it not probable that he was seeking now to be revenged, that he was taking every step to bring ruin upon the head of the man he hated? There was where the terror and dread culminated. Oh! that for a day at least he would be thwarted. And it seemed reasonable to believe that Calculus could not find out for months the defalcations. Many men had committed greater crimes and had escaped for years, why should not he? But he would not do as these men had done, he would, the moment he received the money, pay at once what he had "borrowed" from the bank.

How many men have thought as Robert thought, and have found out the futility of their resolutions!

So Robert went to a hostelry and lay down on a sofa, giving instructions to the barman to have him called at half-past nine o'clock.

While Robert was slumbering, waking up every moment when some terrible vision flashed across his brain, Hugh Hanlon walked to and fro in the Fitzroy Gardens thinking also of what would be his fate. No one knew better than Hugh that Deceiver was his last stake, and that he would be lost if the horse won. It was terrible to notice the agitation of the man as, alone, he walked through the shrubberies, perplexed beyond idea as to what he would do, as to what the future had in store. The sun glinted joyfully on the green foliage, the rejoicing flowers, and brightened even the dark cypresses; but the face of the restless walker to and fro grew more and more troubled. To him nature's beautiful forms give no pleasure. The brighter the day grew, the pleasanter the pretty gardens became, the darker fell the shadows on the soul of this unfortunate man. The misery of his position was nothing to that which he suffered from the unlucky passion for Linda that devoured his soul. All other disappointments, all other apprehensions, were as nothing to this terrible Frankenstein that he had created to torment him. If there is anything that would serve to convince us that the doctrine is true that if we sin here

our sin will be our punishment, it is the fact that every wrong passion we entertain always brings swift and speedy retribution.. An immoral passion resembles in its results to the soul exactly the action of a cancer on the body. First it appears of little importance; but let it only take root, and beyond hope day by day it grows and grows until the whole system falls under its devouring influence, and dissolution can alone end its terrible sway.

One thing stood out clearly, however, before Hugh; this, that if Robert's ruin was hastened, Linda would be perfectly helpless, and then there was hope that at last he would reap the reward of all his scheming. What had he not done to win this woman, what sins had he not committed? And would all end in nothing?

No, said the inward voice, and Hugh Hanlon stood beneath a little clump of cypresses and registered in his soul an oath that Linda Wilton should be his, body and soul, and that Robert Wilton should die in the common gaol. And then he went his way to prepare for the great events of that memorable day.

The barman duly woke Robert, if we can say he slept, at half-past nine, and after a hurried toilet he strode up Collins-street to the Collusive Bank. Breakfast he could not take; he could not swallow a drop of coffee, but he forced down a tumbler of brandy. As he walked up the street, now waking into full life, he felt the same sensations that came over him on the memorable morning after the carouse at St. Kilda, but a thousand-fold intensified. Still it was true that there was not that keen mental agony that is felt by a soul new to sin. The career he had led had, as we have already explained, in a great degree deadened his feelings, and rendered him, not callous, but apathetic. The human soul is like the human body—it can only stand a certain amount of anguish; after that has been passed through, the blow of agony falls with deadened force.

The bank clerks were thronging in as Robert reached the door. Gay young fellows, all looking forward to the excitement of the races—all anxious to get through their work, and hurry to the great spectacle of the year. A sort of demoriac look passed over Robert's face as he noticed this, and he felt as if he could annihilate them for being so merry and careless when he was burdened with a load of sin and sorrow.

"Hallo, Bobs," cried a chorus of the

youths—they all loved the free and genial fellow—"won't this be a glorious day for the Cup?"

"Grand," cried another, for they could give vent to their feelings, as neither Calculus nor Overdraw were present. "Here's young Sprightly, he's got £1000 to 30 about Seesaw and Deceiver. Now as Seesaw has won the Derby it's a moral that Deceiver will pull off the Cup. Can't be off it, you know, as he did the distance, weights up, in 3.36."

"D—the distance and the weights up," cried Robert, for once getting into a rage; "if I've heard that once I have heard it ten thousand times."

The clerks were astonished. Robert was the kindest and sweetest tempered fellow out, and they had never seen him in such a rage before.

"Anyhow," said Sprightly, when the feeling of surprise had somewhat worn away, "I have £1000 next Monday."

"What'll you take for the bet?" cried all in chorus.

"£1000, not a penny less" said Sprightly, walking to his desk with the air of a man who was worth a plum.

"O! won't it be jolly if Deceiver wins," cried several of the clerks as they settled themselves in their customary positions.

"Champagne supper," said Bibison.

"Moet and Chandon for ever," said another.

"What a sell for Megatherium and the ring," said several others laughing.

Just then the messenger rushed in, and held up his hand. Instantly every head was bent down, and pens were scribbling away like so many engines as Calculus and Overdraw walked into the bank. Robert had some money in his hand, and he became so excited that he let it fall on the counter. As he stooped to raise it he met the cold terrible eyes of Calculus, and the dreadful glance shot a thrill through his frame.

During the two hours that elapsed before the bank closed, Robert noticed that Overdraw and Calculus were closeted together, and he could not help observing that while a stern joy lit up the aspid eyes of Calculus, a cloud of trouble appeared to have settled upon Overdraw. Nay, he saw that Overdraw's eyes, when fixed upon him seemed full of pity.

But this might be all fancy. He had thought the same on the dreadful day from which he dated his troubles, but nothing came of all his foolish fears.

Twelve o'clock was boomed through the

air by the monitor which peals forth its notes of alarm from the post-office, and the clerks hurriedly closed their books, and after a little preparation began to sallily forth in quest of conveyances. As they passed out one of the seniors observed to Overdraw:

"Coming to the races, Mr. Overdraw; this is a splendid day."

He knew that Overdraw was in the habit of attending on the Cup Day.

"Not to-day," said Overdraw quietly. "Mail day is near, and I cannot spare the time."

"Of course we will see you there, Mr. Calculus," said the accountant to that gentleman, who was standing beside one of the desks.

"No," replied the dark, forbidding man, in a strange voice, "I will not be able to see the great meeting this time, owing to the pressure of business, but I hope you will enjoy yourselves, gentlemen, only don't bet whatever you do, you know what it leads to."

And Calculus and Mr. Overdraw turned back to the bank parlor.

"To the races; to the races," vociferated cabman after cabman, as they flew up and down the street, soliciting passengers. This was the day of their harvest, and they exerted themselves as they would not have such a chance again. Robert noticed that Metallic Megatherium, Mahaleel Methuselah, and the others were standing Under the Verandah, just as he came out of the bank. He at once went over, and found they were "fixing" several important bets with some of the leading brokers, who, in the absence of mining business, were going in for a little excitement in the betting line. Robert, looking around carefully to see he was not noticed, went over to the Verandah, and was at once hailed as a chieftain. Ill at ease, however, and desirous only to start for the races, he asked Megatherium if he would go at once.

"Everything's all right," replied Megatherium; "Scrupell's had three drinks with us, and he gave me his hand and swore Deceiver would be third at all events. We swore together for half an hour, and when Scrupell swears, why it's all right. Hanlon's carriage and four comes round at half-past twelve precisely—ah! there it is coming up the street."

"Then, had we not better start at once?" said Robert.

"Vell, yes," was the reply of Mahaleel; "but let's have some branty first, for I'm drying mit thirst."

The carriage was soon whirling to Flemington, amidst a crowd of vehicles. The streets were a sight as they passed through, crowded with holiday people dressed in their summer clothes, and wearing the appearance of relaxation and enjoyment. Thousands were making their way to the railway, and at the different ticket offices in the town there was the inevitable scramble, although good-nature was the order of the day, and fun and frolic predominant. But amongst that crowd there were many faces that wore the air of apprehension, and some were painfully anxious.

There was an extraordinary life in the fast-hurrying vehicles on the road that, spite the terrible fears weighing on Robert, helped to stir the blood and infuse some of the old joyous spirit into his heart. But, alas! it was only the shadow of what had been—of the bright days for ever faded from his vision.

The sun shone gloriously, tempered by a healthful breeze that swept in from the wide bay, which was slumbering in its light. The crowd on the hill, in the paddocks, and on the flat, was thickening, minute after minute, and the hum of conversation was every moment growing louder. On the hill, the beautiful green sward was being trodden by the surging mass of humanity, and the ridge was occupied by a lot of betting men, all eager to lay against any horse, vociferating as if life and death depended on rapid utterance. The long line of booths was occupied by a crowd, who were drinking and betting, enlivened by certain minstrels and musicians, who made feeble attempts to drown the noise of the assemblage. Blind men moved about begging, thinking that the public heart was opened at this particular moment, and hoping successful bettors would throw an odd sixpence into their hats; in this case not blind to their own interests at all events. In the distance was to be seen the great city, stretching out in all directions; and far away the masts of the shipping stood out clear and well defined against the bright blue sky. On the whole, nature and humanity seemed to have agreed upon a general carnival.

On the hill, the sombre dresses of the generality of the sterner sex were relieved by the gay attire of the ladies. But it was the lawn which showed the art of the milliner to perfection. Costumes that would not be out of place in the Boulevards and Rotten Row were there to be seen, so that the well-grassed enclosure resembled a parterre of flowers. The saddling paddock was crowded with betting men and speculative gentlemen, the

former in a feverish state of excitement, offering all sorts of odds; the latter surveying the horses as they came out to exercise, and pretending to know a great deal about them, although the majority knew nothing. Scrupell, who was walking about in a very quiet, unobtrusive way, was the object of much attention. He was well taken care of, however, by Metallic Megatherium, who hardly left him for a moment, and who swore until he completely exhausted the language of vituperation. Scrupell listened to him very complacently, and partook of all the drink he insisted on shouting with a very good will.

If there was anything more remarkable than another, it was the general fraternising that took place on the lawn and grand stand. Betting men, the vilest of the vile, though dressed in costly suits, and bedizened with jewellery, walked about amongst the proudest of Melbourne dames and grandees, as if on a perfect footing, although they would be scorned in Collins-street. The ladies of these "swells" also were there in all the glories of the rainbow, eclipsing even the pink of fashion. It was a motley assemblage.

On the flat the humbler classes of the community were assembled, all as eager to witness the race, and as busy in going into sweeps, as their more aristocratic neighbors. Here sixpenny and shilling sweeps were in full swing, only it was noticeable that the parties never separated, and everyone who went into a sweep watched with consuming anxiety the movements of the person who was delegated to hold the stakes. Even then their vigilance was rendered of no avail, and many a joyous holder of the winning horse found all his delight vanish with the stakeholder. Amongst that crowd might have been noticed a little larrikin, thin in face and form, who was very anxious in the getting up of sweeps. It was Patsy Quinlan. Patsy was dressed in a coat of one description, a trousers of another, and in a vest of a third, a little faded, Brummagem jewellery being conspicuous. Still he had evidently made a "rise," and bade fair to make a good start if anyone was so confiding as to entrust him with sweep money. The detectives, who were moving about in plain clothes, noticed that Patsy had a very keen eye on all who wore jewellery, and they, in return, took care to watch that inestimable jewel, Mr. Patsy.

At last, after all the smaller events, the hour drew nigh when the great race of the year was to take place, which would set at



rest everything, and make or mar so many. The blood was propelled from many a heart faster, and many an eager eye scanned the horses as they exercised in the paddock. The hill became densely packed, everyone rushing to secure a place, and innumerable fights took place on the flat, owing to disputes as to who should be foremost. Presently the great favorite of the day made his appearance, and began taking his preliminary canter in front of the grand stand. A splendid horse was Deceiver, beautifully and delicately made, but with considerable strength, and manifesting that valuable thing, power of "staying." The ease with which he galloped, and his evidently prime condition, inspired the public with the utmost confidence, and a rush was at once made to get "on" him. To this the bookmakers responded liberally, and until the horses stood at the starting-post they were busy as bees putting down bets in their books, chuckling with glee in the meantime as they thought how the "dear public" would be sold.

And now there was a rush for the grand stand, which was soon packed with human sandwiches, and the whole vast assemblage—50,000 people at least—were hushed as death. The betting men for a moment ceased their clamor, the musicians silenced their instruments, and even the ladies stayed for a moment their tittle-tattle about each other, and strained their eyes to see the start. At last the flag dropped and away they went, past the grand stand in gallant style, all in a ruck, some horse of no importance leading. "You could cover them with a blanket" was the general cry. Again the betting men tried to get the public "on," but they were too much occupied to bother about that. On, the field swept, with little alteration, until the turn of the river was reached, when several of the duffers began to tail off, and four horses took leading positions. The favorites, however, were a little behind. And now the abattoirs were passed. The excitement reached fever-heat. Here the horses were put out all their powers; now there would be some criterion as to what horses were to be in the struggle. The day being clear, it was soon seen "what was the matter." The ruck had dropped behind, and now three horses began to extend themselves, and to rapidly gain on the four that had hitherto held the supremacy. These three were Heavihoof, Deceiver, and Stamper. A great shout arose from the hill, the stand, the flat—"Now they're going! Blue and yellow (Heavihoof), green

and black (Stamper), red and blue (Deceiver)."

Up the three horses came with a terrible rush, neck and neck, passing the four that had been leading up to this time. Now it became evident that the race lay between these three; for the whalebone had been unmercifully applied to the rest, and they had refused to answer. Terrible was the excitement. The blood flew like wildfire through the frames of all.

"Heavihoof has it; Heavihoof has it," again was the cry, as that gallant animal gamely answered the whip, and put himself three-quarters of a length ahead of his opponents. The faces of the great bulk of the onlookers, who had bet heavily on Deceiver, fell, and many pale faces were to be seen, the hands clenched, and teeth firmly shut. Scrupell stood by the fence, where he had taken his stand. By his side stood Metallic Megatherium, Mahaleel Methuselah, Robert, and Hugh Hanlon, with other sporting men, amongst whom was Detective Meddle, whose green eyes were lit up with a sort of fiendish glare.

"G——d—— the fellow," cried Megatherium; "what does he mean by letting Deceiver come up so close? And I am —— if he has not touched him with the whip!"

Here Megatherium lost all control of himself, and gave vent to such a string of terrible oaths that even his companions were horrified.

"He is making a show for the race," said Hugh Hanlon, who spoke shortly, the rapid pulsations of his heart preventing utterance. As he spoke he saw a superb-looking lady, dressed in black velvet, sitting in the grand stand. Her eyes were fixed on the horses; her face was pale as death itself. This was Marian Lee.

Down the straight they came, tearing along like the wind. Heavihoof a little ahead, Stamper close to him, and Deceiver well up. Never had such a race been witnessed on the Flemington course.

"My God! my God!" cried Robert.

There was no doubt of it. Deceiver's jockey raised his whip about half-way down the straight, and administered a terrible blow. Then, with one grand leap, the splendid creature placed himself on Stamper's neck, another few strides and he was neck and neck with Heavihoof.

"Deceiver! Deceiver!" came from forty thousand throats, like the sound of a mighty tempest. "Red and blue for ever!"

And a great cheer arose in the air, thundering and reverberating until it seemed like the sound of cannon on the field of battle.

But Heavihoof's jockey plied the whalebone in all the wild desperation of a man whose life depended on the race. Neck and neck up they came, the whipcord being unsparingly applied. On to within a few lengths of the judge, and then, with a tremendous rush, Deceiver forged ahead, and won the Melbourne Cup by half a neck!

That moment another great shout arose in the air, and Scrupell's friends rushed towards him. It was well for him they did; for, had they not, he might not have lived another minute, for Metallic Megatherium and Hugh Hanlon were striving to get at him, although he had cautiously withdrawn himself from them during the excitement of the finish. In Megatherium's hand, although only a few noticed it, was a revolver. But Scrupell was immediately surrounded by his friends, and they included all who had won on Deceiver—half those on the course—and his hat was at once taken off and jumped upon, his new dust-coat torn to rags, and himself borne on the shoulders of his admirers to the next bar, where champagne *ad lib.* was shouted. As he went, he caught sight of the members of the ring standing outside the circle,—rage, disappointment, and ruin plainly depicted in their faces. That of Metallic Megatherium was simply horrible.

"Ha! ha!" cried the old man. "Ha! ha! I've had you at last. You nobbled my horse and ruined me; now I have done you. Hurrah!"

And his friends raised a great shout, the hill and flat ringing with cheer after cheer for "Plucky Jem" as his friends—those who had won—termed him. There was an immediate rush to all the booths to drink his health, the only absentees being those who went to look after their sweeps at the different trysting-places appointed, where some of the stakeholders were found and some not.

Robert stood grasping the fence like a drunken man. Ruin was his now beyond all hope—ruin, death, destruction! All flashed through his brain like a perfect panorama. Death—death—was all that remained for him now!

He turned round to the grand stand in a sort of perfunctory manner, to see what had caused an agonising scream he had heard amidst the great din of the final struggle. Yet the spectacle appeared not to interest him, though it should. Marian Lee, with a great cry, had fainted, and was now sur-

rounded by a number of ladies, who did all they could for her—that is, to prevent her returning to consciousness. Even in the presence of that dreadfully pale face, apparently still in death, they began wondering what had caused her to faint. Such is female curiosity.

Mahaleel Methuselah sprang up as if shot when Deceiver came in first, and did not recover speech for a long time. When he did the only words that came from his lips were, "A ruint! a ruint! O! mein Got, mein Got! —a ruint, a ruint!"

Hugh Hanlon's face grew dark as eternal night, and all its beauty was lost in the demoniacal expression that came over it.

Megatherium forgot to curse! That was sufficient. But when he did recover, the torrent of blasphemy that poured from his lips would have rejoiced Sterne or Rabelais.

Before they had gathered their senses together, a gentlemanly-dressed man came up to Detective Meddle, who showed some signs of agitation, and whispered a few words to him. Both glanced at Mahaleel Methuselah. He soon saw it, and crouched away. Detective Meddle went over to him.

"You are wanted," he said quietly.

"Vy, vy?" screamed the agitated Hebrew.

"You will know," replied Detective Meddle, without moving a muscle.

"Your own frient, mein Got," gasped the Jew. "Oh! let me go, and all, all, I vill gif you."

He would have knelt and kissed the dust off Detective Meddle's shoes.

"Here," said the latter, and the other person, who was also a detective, walked quietly over, and, without any unnecessary demonstrativeness, beckoned to two policemen in plain clothes, who walked Methuselah off, wringing his hands and weeping.

The wretched party noticed this with a shudder.

Detective Meddle now walked to where Robert was standing, and, putting his hand on his shoulder, said, in a very easy tone, "Mr. Wilton, you are wanted at the bank."

It had come!

Robert bowed his head. His worn-out nerves refused to answer. He walked away with the detective, like a man in a dream, utterly careless of what was to come.

Hugh Hanlon's face brightened as he saw this. A thrill of joy shot through his heart.

As Robert passed out, Marian Lee, who had revived, saw him. With a low cry, she rushed to him, and, clasping him in her

embrace, bestowed several burning kisses on his face.

"I love you still," she cried in passionate tones; "I love you to the death—in sin, in shame, in sorrow."

A momentary spasm passed through his frame, and then he passed on to meet his fate.

While this was passing on the lawn another scene was taking place on the flat.

Patsy Quinlan had managed to get hold of some sweep money, and was quietly making off towards the city, instead of seeking the post which had been appointed as the place of meeting. He thought he had escaped, when a heavily-bearded man came up to him with a sort of comic grin on his face.

"Well, Patsy, I've found you at last," said the stranger, in quite a patronising way.

Patsy gave one terrified look, and then bounded off like a deer. But his pursuer was too quick for him, and in a few minutes Patsy was handed over to two policemen, and walked off handcuffed.

"Patsy's nabbed at last," cried a larrikin, who was standing by amidst a crowd of comrades; "he's done for, anyhow, for a couple of years."

"Game fellow, Patsy," said another. "He'll stand it like a brick, I'll be bound."

"He'll be chums in quod with Bob Smith, anyway," said another; "and they'll be rare nuts to deal with."

#### PART XIV.

##### FATE HOLDS THE SCALES.

How quietly and without any demonstration Detective Meddle led his captive into the train, as if he were taking him home. There was a sort of satisfied leer on his face, as he sat down by his prisoner's side. What satisfaction it was to this wretch to think that he had at last brought down to the lowest level the handsome youth whom he had hated and envied.

"It is all over, Bobs," he said.

"All over," was the quiet reply. Robert gazed stonily out on the animated scene, as if he saw it not. And he did not. He beheld the crowd and the panorama as through a mist, but there were present forms too painfully tangible—forms that arose and accused him of having cast off their friendships, disregarded their warnings, and wronged them irrevocably. And then came the reckless despair, which nature, fortunately for us, gives when the blow is too heavy to bear.

"It's all over with all of us," continued Detective Meddle gloomily. "Mahaleel Methuselah will catch it warm, for he is said to have committed great crimes. In one of the cases against him you will be called as a witness."

"I," said Robert, waking from his lethargy. "Impossible."

"Remember the £400 cheque you could not comprehend."

"Yes," replied Robert, livening up; "I thought I had cashed a £400 cheque, and it turned out to be one for £100."

"So it had been originally," replied Detective Meddle, "but by means of an ingenious chemical preparation they were able to add lines which made the 1 a 4, which disappeared after a few days."

Robert wrung his hands in anguish.

"And it was through this I went astray," he cried mournfully.

"As for you," said Detective Meddle, "it was purposely done. Hugh Hanlon hated you and loved your wife and money, and so worked out his revenge while benefitting himself."

A light dawned over Robert, a light, however, that only served to throw his soul into greater gloom, and to show him what a terrible fool he had been.

"The game might have gone on for years, and made good Methuselah's losses at loo and racing, had he not in an evil hour employed Patsy Quinlan. Clerks and cashiers who had such cheques passed on them were only glad to compound as you did. But Patsy attracted attention, especially from the result which followed, and a careful examination disclosed the whole system. Hugh Hanlon, Mahaleel Methuselah, and Metallic Megatherium are implicated, and the crime being so dangerous, they will all suffer terrible penalties."

Robert felt a sort of grim joy at this.

"But why only take up Methuselah?" he asked.

"Simply because it is necessary to have him to establish certain facts, upon which the others will be seized. Believe me all is neatly arranged. You must have been a fool."

And Detective Meddle glared upon his helpless victim. Robert did not answer, but the moisture began to fill his eyes, and his throat became husky.

Such were the companions for whom he had driven away those who loved him dearly, who would have saved him.

Once Spencer-street was reached a cab was

called, and the strange pair drove rapidly to the Collusive Bank. Collins-street was deserted, looking like a tomb, and what a sepulchre the huge bank seemed to Robert. A sepulchre indeed, for he would leave its walls a prisoner for ever!

Overdraw and Calculus sat at the manager's table. Overdraw's usually tranquil face was excited and troubled. There was in it an unmistakeable regret and pity that did honor to the man. The countenance of Calculus was stony in its grimness; no sculptured Sphinx could be more inscrutable. A great triumph was written, however, on its hard cold lines.

At this moment a hansom drove up the street, and stopping before the Collusive Bank its occupant came out, and, paying the driver, hastily sought the protection of a very deep doorway. Many a passer by wondered what that beautiful, splendidly-dressed woman meant by standing there that evening; but Marian Lee never moved, waiting for the fate that was to come.

"Mr. Wilton," said Calculus coldly, and in a tone of voice that cut like a knife, "we have patiently gone through your books and find there is a deficiency of £6700. Can you explain this?"

Overdraw looked appealingly towards Robert, hoping to the last that he would clear up the matter; that the money was locked up somewhere by mistake, or that there was some desperate remedy. But Robert's face gave no sign of hope.

"I will not deny it," said Robert, striving to keep down the emotion that was overmastering him; "I have robbed the bank of that sum, and I cannot repay it."

"Great God!" cried Mr. Overdraw, with a groan; "so young, so apparently good, so damnably lost."

Robert did not answer; he simply laid his head on the table and burst into a passion of tears and sobs.

"A set of wretches cheated me first, and then led me on to complications that rendered it impossible for me to escape," said Robert. "I have sinned, I will bear the punishment."

"Amen," said Overdraw.

"Detective Meddle," said Calculus, a gleam of triumph shooting from his eyes, "I see nothing now to be done except to have this man formally arrested and taken to gaol."

Robert uttered a deep suppressed groan, and rushed over to where Mr. Overdraw sat.

"Oh! Mr. Overdraw," he cried in an im-

ploring voice, "if ever you had a regard for me, grant me a last request."

"Wretched boy," said Mr. Overdraw, "what is that?"

"To send for my poor wife," replied Robert. "Let me see her before I leave the world, before I am a prisoner; let me commend her to the care of the only friend who will protect her."

Overdraw was powerfully moved. Linda he knew and loved, and the thoughts of what she would suffer was agony to the good old gentleman.

"You have no objection, Calculus?" he said. "Let him see her."

Calculus studied. Then, as if he desired to gloat over the sufferings of the man he hated, he silently nodded his head in assent. Mr. Overdraw then wrote out a short note to Linda and delivered it to one of the servants, who at once departed to Balaclava. During his absence the four sat in the room without saying a word, Calculus reading a paper, Mr. Overdraw confusedly going over figures, knowing not what they were, and Robert and Detective Meddle doing nothing. As they sat the light began to fade, and the sound of the vehicles and horsemen returning from the races grew into a great roar. How little did any there heed the joyous carnival! The sudden stoppage of a cab at the door made them all start, and ere they had recovered, Linda Wilton, pale as death, rushed into the room, and fainted in Robert's arms.

Poor erring Robert: Nature then resumed her sway, and he became once more conscious of all he had lost.

What love was this? Notwithstanding the manner in which he had used her, his unfaithfulness and hardheartedness, she loved him still, and when ruin and disgrace were his she clung to him to the last.

O! the power, the beauty, the holiness of unselfish love!

"There's a power whose sway  
Angel souls adore,  
And the lost obey,  
Weeping evermore!"

She listened to Mr. Overdraw while, in a voice that displayed what he felt, he told her what had taken place, and what would be the inevitable result.

"The public have been aroused so much of late by the number and extent of these defalcations," said Mr. Overdraw, "that no mercy can be looked for. His punishment will be fearful."

"He *will* be saved," cried Linda, rising



and glancing imploringly at the arbiters of Fate, who sat there so unmoved, Mr. Overdraw excepted. "O! give him time."

"My good lady," said Calculus, "do not entertain delusive hopes. Cast your husband from you; he is unworthy of your thoughts."

As he said this he threw an admiring glance at the pale but exquisitely beautiful creature who stood by Robert's side.

"You will not save him," cried Linda, with a terrible look at Calculus. "I know of one who will. Give me an hour, and the money will be paid."

"What! compound a felony?" cried Calculus.

"No, no, no; but to save an erring creature, who knew not what he did!" replied Linda.

"Give her an hour," said Overdraw almost pitifully. "What need we fear in the meantime. Reflect, Mr. Calculus, what will be the result. We will ruin for ever a poor human being, who may, if rescued, become a better man. Consider that unless we show mercy, we need not expect to have mercy shown unto us."

Linda's face shone with thankfulness to the benevolent old gentleman. Then turning to Detective Meddle, she said:—

"Surely, you will not refuse me?"

Detective Meddle hesitated for a moment. A trait of kindness came into his face. How could he refuse this pleading creature?

"One hour only," asked Linda. "I will go to dear Harry, Robert, and he will save you."

"O! do not," said Robert; "leave me to my fate. Don't think about such a worthless creature. Think what I have done to Harry."

"He will not think of it," said the girl, whose face was now flushed with hope and excitement.

Calculus did not say a word. He saw that he had the power to stay everything at any moment. It was only so much more agony for the man he hated.

Linda kissed Robert passionately and then rushed away.

As she left the bank door a woman came up to her, and asked in a strangely broken voice: "Will he be saved?"

Linda looked. Yes, it was Marian Lee. In such a moment she had no time to remember her bitter jealousy.

"He will," replied Linda, and stepping into the cab she told the driver to hasten to St. Kilda.

"Don't spare the horse," she cried; "if you kill him I will pay his price."

And for life and death the horse was urged to his utmost speed down the now deserted street.

## PART XV.

### THE POWER OF LOVE.

What wondrous love is this—  
What mighty power unknown,  
Dispensing perfect bliss,  
That God himself might own!

It would be difficult to depict Harry's feelings as he neared St. Kilda. He knew perfectly well that a loving wife—the love of his early youth—was waiting there to plead with him to save the man whom he had loved, whom he still loved, so passionately. He knew that his duty to society and to himself forbade him to save that man. There came burning hot into his mind the recollection of the manner in which he had been used by this man—the slights, the insults, he had received; his true and constant love thrown away for the attractions of the gaming table, the company of vagabonds, the smiles of sirens. When he thought of that, Harry half made a resolution that he would not try to save Robert. But then came stealing over his soul all the love that in his inmost heart he felt for this poor sinner, and he felt that, after all, Robert loved him still. The very insults seemed to prove that Robert was not bereft of that affection which, in the old times, subsisted between them. How often do we find that love is the cause of bitterness—how often does passionate love cause seeming hate?

Linda was there, standing at the gate, eagerly watching for him. As he alighted, she came forward and threw her arms around him. Then she fainted, and they carried her inside, and the housekeeper bathed her face. But the moment she revived, she cast her eyes around wildly, and seeing Harry, who sat by, the prey of conflicting passions—for alas! that old, old love had come into his heart again—she sprang up wildly, and kneeling at his feet, grasped his knees.

"Harry, Harry—dear, dear Harry," she moaned, "save him, save him!"

She could say no more, but her beautiful face was lifted to his in the agony of entreaty; her eyes sought his to see if there was relenting in them. She saw he was undecided, and then her anguish became uncontrollable. She clasped his knees, uttering incoherent prayers for help.

It was a terrible moment. Never had his mind been torn with such emotions as agitated it now.

"Oh! Harry," pleaded the wretched girl, "they are waiting to take him to gaol—to die, to become a felon—to—to—"

But her voice failed her, and blinding tears rolled down her pale, agonized face.

Like the gleam of lightning in the gloom of night a thought came into Harry's mind. A picture was photographed in his brain that burned it as if with electric fire. Robert, the loved companion of his youth, the dearest to him of all men, a criminal in the dock, perhaps a suicide, a prisoner in the gaol—lost to society, to this world and that which is to come! The head that had so often rested on his bosom, shorn of its curls; the face that had so often looked lovingly into his, deformed, the graceful form that had so often been clasped in his, clad in the felon's dress! Horror! Horror!

She saw he was relenting—she saw his love was returning. Then she renewed her voiceless entreaties, pleading with her face and eyes as no woman has pleaded.

He staggered back, and the tears came into his eyes. Then his heart melted, and he turned to the poor creature who was clinging to him, and, kissing her, said, in a low and broken voice:

"I will save him."

"'Twas something like the burst from death to life;

From the grave's ceremonies to the robes of heaven;

From sin's dominion, and from passion's strife,  
To the pure freedom of a soul forgiven;

Where all the bonds of death and hell are riven,  
And mortal put on immortality,  
When Mercy's hand hath turn'd the golden key,  
And Mercy's voice hath said, *Rejoice, thy soul is free.*"

But in her great joy she did not forget that the time was short, and that she might have outstayed the hour of grace.

"Come, Harry, come," she cried; "they only gave me an hour, and it may have passed. Come."

He, too, was anxious now. The cloud had been dispersed, the evil passions had flown before that pure and glorious love which shone now perfect as the day. He would save the boy he loved; he would bring him back to life again!

The carriage was at the gate, and they hurried to it with the haste of those who go to save a dear one's life. Willy, who, with the housekeeper, had retired, now appeared, and sprang on to the seat to drive them to the city.

They had come to the gate when a man

stood before them. The lights of the carriage lamps fell upon him, and revealed Hugh Hanlon. His face was pale as death. He had watched the drama that was acting at the Collusive Bank with all the anxiety of one who sought to gratify love and revenge. He knew that Harry would be the last resource, and it was with the object of foiling Linda that he had come to St. Kilda, hoping to counteract her influence, or, failing in that, to execute some desperate coup that would prevent Harry's appearance on the scene in time.

"Have you yielded to this foolish woman?" he asked, standing in the way.

"O! don't listen to him," cried Linda, clinging desperately to Harry. Intense agony again took possession of her soul.

"Stand out of the way," cried Harry; "this is no time to delay."

What maddening sight it was for Hugh to see this woman so lovingly enfold Harry.

"You shall not go," he cried, standing in front of Harry. "By God, you shall not go."

Harry hesitated one moment, and then, drawing back his arm, sent Hugh his full length upon the pavement.

He rose, his face gleaming like a demon's. At that moment Willy, who was looking on, caught a side view of the terrible face. Memory at once restored to him the awful countenance he had seen revealed by the moonlight that terrible night in the Yarra scrub. He sprang off the box.

"This is the man," cried Willy, in a dreadful voice. "I know him now; my sister's murderer; the wretch who killed poor Bella."

Hugh gazed for one moment on the inflamed youth, and then, terror seizing his soul, as it will that of all the guilty, with a sort of terrified cry, he rushed into the darkness.

Willy heeded nothing now. The murderer of his loved and lost sister was before him, and, with all the strength and swiftness of youth, he followed.

There was a momentary suspense, and then Linda recollected the terrible fact that she was waited for, and implored Harry to hurry on. He needed no remonstrance. Strange as was the scene which had been enacted, the desire to save Robert rose paramount. He sprang on to the box, and, seizing the reins, lashed the horses into a gallop.

Not a word was said as the gallant horses, reeking with foam, flew on, their hoofs striking fire, and the sound of their galloping reverberating on all sides. People wondered

as the carriage flashed by them, and thought some one was dying.

So there was, dying a death more fearful than that which is material, a death of the soul.

Up the St. Kilda-road, down by the Immigrants' Home, through Swanston-street, along Collins-street to the Collusive Bank, the carriage sped. Harry drew up the horses on to their haunches and sprang off, assisted Linda out, and the two entered the bank. By its door stood a veiled female, but they saw her not.

"Thank God!" she said; "he is saved. Oh! what a noble man is Harry Robertson!"

The appointed hour had elapsed, and more than two hours as well. Still they had sat there, Calculus watching with a terrible pleasure the agony of Robert. But nature had come to his relief, and his head had fallen on to the table, a state of semi-unconsciousness having set in.

Overdraw's face grew bright when Harry's well-known form appeared. Linda rushed to Robert, and, falling on his neck, fainted. Robert raised himself a little, but when he saw his friend, he hid his face and cowered like a guilty creature.

"Give me a cheque, Mr. Overdraw," said Harry, sitting down at the table. "You know how my account stands."

"Yes," replied Overdraw, joyously; "over £30,000."

Rapidly Harry filled up a cheque for £6700, and then handed it to Mr. Overdraw.

"This is to cover whatever deficiencies are to be found in Mr. Wilton's books," he said, with suppressed excitement.

Overdraw rose, clutched the cheque, and then grasped Harry's hand.

"Let me," he said in a broken voice, "let me clasp the hand of a true man. Mr. Robertson, I never knew one who came up to my standard of a man until I met you."

"This is all very well," said Calculus, coldly, rising and coming up to Overdraw. "I am glad the bank is secured; but, of course, that does not in the slightest degree interfere with Mr. Wilton's crime. He is guilty, and no power, not even that of Mr. Robertson's bank account—potent though it is—here he sneered—can save him from the law."

The faces of all fell, and Harry's breath for a moment stopped. Now that he was near Robert, all his affection had returned, and he would have died to save him.

"To err is human, to forgive divine," said Overdraw, in a trembling voice. "Mr. Calculus, we have received the money, and

are to a certain degree participators in the crime. I command you to stay your opposition—to save the boy."

"All your platitudes go for nothing," said Calculus, not coldly this time, but in a terribly excited manner, his eyes flashing fire. "I am your superior officer, and I command you to be silent. Detective Meddle, arrest that criminal, and take him to the common watchhouse."

But there was another listener. As Calculus uttered these words, a veiled female entered the room hurriedly.

"Mr. Calculus," said a voice from beneath the veil, rich and musical, but trembling, "two words with you. Detective Meddle, stay until I have spoken to this man."

She said this in a commanding tone. Calculus stopped, hesitated, and then, in obedience to the imperative wave of the veiled lady's hand, followed her out.

What passed between them no one knew; but in a few minutes Calculus returned, his face pale as ashes, his frame trembling.

"Mr. Meddle," he said, "Mr. Wilton has accounted for all moneys missing, and the Collusive Bank holds him guiltless in every respect. He is free, and you can retire."

What pen could paint the feelings of the four, who had been waiting, like doomed prisoners, for the sentence?

They had not recovered when three gentlemen entered. One was the highest police functionary in Victoria. The other two were detectives. The former walked up to Detective Meddle, and was followed by the latter, who laid their hands on Detective Meddle.

"Mr. Meddle," said the officer, "you are our prisoner. The inquiries which you yourself set on foot have resulted in your implication with the nefarious swindlers who have infested this city. Say nothing, but accompany these men."

And, with pallid face, Detective Meddle walked out of the bank, handcuffed by his former comrades. The superior only waited to apologise for his intrusion, and then followed them. Calculus cast one terrible look at Robert, and then left the room.

There was a dead silence for a few minutes, and then Robert rose, and clasping Harry in his arms, imprinted a passionate kiss on his face. Then he turned away.

"I shall go," he said, mournfully: "I am unfit for such love—unfit to breathe the same air as those who love me, a worthless criminal. I will soon rid the world of so ungrateful a wretch."

But Linda came to him, and embracing him, said:

"I will never leave you, Robert."

And Harry's arms were soon around his neck.

"Though thy brother sin seventy-and-seven times, yet forgive him if he sin the seventieth and eighth time," he murmured. "So said our great Teacher, and shall we, sinful creatures, be less merciful? Forget the past, dear Robert, and strive to atone it by your future."

Mr. Overdraw spoke not; he sat at the table, brushing away the tears that flowed down his cheeks.

"But I cannot; I cannot," replied Robert, in a dazed, helpless way. "How can I be worthy such love? I used you as if you were my greatest enemy. I—"

"Say no more," said Harry. "'Let the dead past bury its dead.' I know now that throughout you loved me as in the days of old. A cloud came between us, but it is now lifted up, and the sun of our love shines brighter than before."

What love was this? Robert stood there as one amazed.

"He did; he did," said Linda.

"Come with us, dear Robert," said Harry, "and we will go home, home, home, to begin a new and a better life."

And after bidding Mr. Overdraw, who was still striving to conceal his emotion, good-bye, they went forth, and the carriage was driven away.

As it drove off, Marian Lee emerged from the shadow of the doorway, where she had awaited the result. She caught a glimpse of Robert as he went, and then she staggered back against the pillars of the bank.

## PART XVI.

### RETRIBUTION.

"There's a divinity that shapes our ends,  
Rough hew them as we may."

There was a great horror upon Hugh Hanlon's soul as he rushed out into the darkness, followed by the avenger of blood. In a second, the dreadful reality flashed across his mind. He knew that if he did not escape, the gaol, the condemned cell, the gallows would be his. He felt convinced that all had been discovered, and that there was no way of escape. In the agony of his spirit, Linda, Robert, love and revenge, were forgotten—all vanished before the awful fate that was hanging over him. Imagination painted a ghastly being, wet with the slime

of the river, with a grey distorted face, following him, and shrieking in his ear, "Vengeance!" Behind him came the rapid steps of the pursuer, and the ghostly sound of the feet of the imaginary Nemesis.

Down High-street, into the Albert Park, Hugh rushed, as if impelled by an unseen power. The world seemed to whirl around, the stars to flash angrily.

The pursuer was closing upon him. The young, vigorous form of Willy was more than a match for the worn-out frame of Hugh, strung up though it was with a terrible excitement. A little more, and he knew what would be the result.

They were near the railway. Afar off, towards Emerald Hill, the red eye of the engine was seen as it tore on to St. Kilda. To Hugh it seemed the eye of an avenging spirit.

He would cross the railway, and perhaps be able to hide in some of the clumps of fern or in the boxes of the volunteers.

He sprang over the fence, and rushed on over the rails. On came the terrible iron horse, with a shrill scream, as of a savage seeking the life of an enemy.

Hugh glanced hurriedly at the livid red eye, that was coming up as if with lightning speed.

It was a fatal hesitation. Coming against the last rail but one, he stumbled, and fell prone upon it.

There was a rush, a swirl, a loud unearthly shriek as of triumph, a low cry, and the train passed by with a mighty scream.

Willy had just time to draw himself up as the monster passed over the prostrate form of Hugh Hanlon. When it had gone, he gazed with horror on the mangled remains of the murderer of his sister.

"God has avenged you, poor Bella," said the awe-stricken youth, as he stood before the terrible wreck of humanity, whose blood was soaking the bluestone ballast and dyeing the rails a gory red.

And a voice, not of this world, seemed to whisper into his ear:

"*Justo judicio Dei judicatus sum! Justo judicio Dei condemnatus sum!*"

\* \* \* \* \*

Three persons sat at Harry's breakfast-table the next morning—three happy souls. Linda had already recovered some of the bloom and beauty that had been hers when first we introduced her to the reader. Harry was supremely happy, and his handsome face beamed with quiet felicity. He did not blame himself for saving Robert, for he felt



convinced that, in doing so, he had only done his duty, and prevented the ruin of a human soul. He did not for one moment think that it was a crime to prevent the plunging into endless sin of a poor, misguided brother. Robert felt unutterably happy; the load was lifted off his soul, and Harry had shown him a means of retrieving himself, and paying all back, that he could not now doubt his future. How he loved Harry now! Yet he could not but feel the deepest sorrow and humiliation, and his only hope was to show the world the sincerity of his repentance, and to try and repay Harry his inexpressible love.

The postman's knock disturbed their reveries. In a few minutes the servant entered, and delivered a letter. It was addressed to Harry. He tore it open, and another envelope fell out. It bore the name of Robert.

Robert glanced at it, and then turned his eyes away.

"I will not read it," he said.

He knew the handwriting; it was Marian's.

"But see," said Harry, "it is marked 'Immediate.'"

"Read it, Harry; I will not."

Harry read it, and a deep shade passed over his face as he went on.

"Great God!" he exclaimed; "this is love! Those we think utterly worthless have still a beautiful human soul. Marian Lee is no more."

Linda and Robert started.

"I will read this," said Harry.

They silently assented.

And, in a voice trembling with emotion, he read as follows:—

"Darling of My Soul,—When you open this, Marian Lee will be in the Land where God judges the wicked and the good. I it was, through my overwhelming passion, led you on to ruin. I it was who, to gratify my own desires, drew you into a net from whence you could not escape, and which I was unable, however willing, to disentangle. Oh, Robert! how I love you!—how, as I write these lines, I adore you! By day, by night, your image has been with me, until my passion has grown so strong that nothing but death will destroy it. Your arms will never again unfold me; your lips will never again kiss mine; your dear eyes will no more bless me with their maddening glances.

"I stood outside the bank while your fate was being decided. I heard Calculus refuse all offers, and order you to be arrested. Then, I resolved to save you. What I know of him, what power I have over him, I will not tell;

suffice it to say that he has been far guiltier than you. I knew it, and threatened him with exposure; hence what followed. Dear Robert, I was not wholly worthless; I did one good action at least.

"But when you drove away with your wife and friend, I knew you were lost to me for ever. I went home in despair. I found myself a lost woman. My money gone; my love lost for ever; the shadows of a life of sin weighing upon me; no hope for the future;—do you wonder why I sat down and wrote this letter? why, when I have closed it, I will take laudanum, and sleep into Eternity? I could not live without you.

"Oh! Robert, Robert! how I have loved you! Linda loved you with the pure and chaste love of souls like hers; but I, poor unfortunate creature, loved you with a passion to which such blessed beings as Linda are strangers. And you will hate my memory—spurn it from you as an unholy thing. So be it. May you live to be blessed in the love of Linda—in the love of that glorious man whom you have the privilege to call your friend;—may a happy home be yours, a life of virtue and peace. And I—I will go—whither I know not. God have mercy on my soul!—In death,

"MARIAN."

Tears, blessed tears, were shed by that little circle. Linda cast her arms around Robert, and whispered: "She loved you; she saved you."

Presently they rose, and walked out to Marian's house. It was not far distant. It was very quiet. An aged woman opened the gate.

"Is your mistress in?" Harry asked.

"No, sir; she is in her dressing-room, and she told me last night not to come until I was called."

They entered the room. It was filled with the gentle light of morning. Reclining on the couch, as if in a gentle sleep, was the form of Marian, dressed in rich robes. Never had she looked so gloriously beautiful. A camellia nestled in her hair, and in her hand was a portrait of Robert.

\* \* \* \* \*

The rest of our story is soon told. By Harry's influence, Robert was started as a merchant in Melbourne. By diligent attention to business, he was soon enabled to pay back the £6700, and to resume his position in life. Yet to this hour there is a shadow on his soul that will never be lifted. His will be a life of penitence and sorrow. He

has before him a model—Harry; and it has been his aim to live like him. The most perfect love subsists between the two. There is no shadow on the life of Linda now; she is a happy mother, a loving wife.

In the Melbourne Cemetery there is a plain monument, bearing the following inscription:—

“ MARIAN.

IMPLORA PACE.

‘The mercy of God is infinite.’”

Willy Dawson entered into the mercantile establishment of Robert, and has become his trusted confidant. Imbued with the lessons and example of Harry, he is certain to become a leading and respected citizen.

Megatherium, Methuselah, Meddle, and

Patsy Quinlan are reaping the reward of their crimes in Pentridge.

Calculus lives on, but he has become a miserable misanthrope. His terrible nature has made him a curse to himself and all with whom he is connected.

The end has come. Dear Reader, let not the lessons we have endeavored to inculcate be lost. Believe that sobriety, regularity, and conscientiousness carry their full rewards in this life; that dissoluteness, gaming, betting, and the following of strange women result in dishonor, ruin, and death. And know that, of all blessings in this world, pure devoted, disinterested love is supreme.

“ There’s a power whose sway  
Angel souls adore,  
And the lost obey,  
Weeping evermore.”



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3. In filling up the form be particular in describing the land offered as security, and the buildings erected or to be erected thereon. Then send the form to the office of the Society.
4. If the money is required for the purpose of Building, send a plan and specification along with the application form to the office.
5. On receiving notice that the loan is granted, place yourself at once in communication with such one of the Society's Solicitors as you may be directed at the office of the Society.
6. Survey Fees, 5s. first Share, and 2s. 6d. for every succeeding Share; but if only two Shares, charge to be 10s.; and if number of Shares exceed ten, the allowance above ten up to twenty-five shall be 1s. per Share, and then cease. Foregoing only applicable within five miles from Melbourne; beyond that distance, such Survey Fees as Committee may think reasonable.

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